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SCULPTING IN TIME

TARKOVSKY

The Great Russian Filmmaker Discusses His Art

Translated from the Russian by Kitty Hunter-Blair

SCULPTING IN TIME

Andrey Tarkovsky was born in Zavrozhie on the Volga in 1932. In 1960 he graduated from the Soviet State Film School with his first film *The Steamroller and the Violin.*

He made five more films in Russia: *Ivan's Childhood,* 1962, *Andrey Rublyov,* 1966, *Solaris,* 1972, *Mirror,* 1978 and *Stalker,* 1979. In 1983 he made *Nostalgia* in Italy and his last film, *The Sacrifice,* was made in Sweden in 1986.

He died in Paris on 29 December 1986.

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Editor's Note

This new edition of *Sculpting in Time* contains an additional chapter on Tarkovsky's last film *The Sacrifice.* He wrote this, and made revisions to the text of the book, shortly before his death.

Introduction

Some fifteen years ago, as I was jotting down notes for the first draft of this book, 1 found myself wondering whether there really was any point in writing it at all. Why not just go on making one film after another, finding practical solutions to those theoretical problems which arise whenever one is working on a film?

My professional biography has been none too happy; the intervals between films were long and painful enough to leave me free to consider—for want of anything better to do—exactly what my own aims were; what are the factors that distinguish cinema from the other arts; what I saw as its unique potential; and how my own experience compared with the experience and achievements of my colleagues. Reading and rereading books on the history of cinema, I came to the conclusion that these did not satisfy me, but made me want to argue and put forward my own view of the problems and the objectives of film-making. I realised that I generally came to recognise my own working principles through questioning established theory, through the urge to express my own understanding of the fundamental laws of this art form.

My frequent encounters with vastly differing audiences also made me feel that I had to make as full a statement as possible. They seriously wanted to understand how and why cinema, and my work in particular, affected them as it did; they wanted answers to countless questions, in order to find some kind of common denominator for their random and disordered thoughts on cinema and on art in general.

I have to confess that I would read with the greatest attention and interest—at some moments with distress, but at others with huge encouragement—the letters from people who had seen my films; during the years I was working in Russia these built up into an impressive and variegated collection of questions addressed to me or things which people were at a loss to understand.

I should like to quote here some of the most typical of these letters in order to illustrate the kind of contact—on occasion one of total incomprehension—that I had with my audiences.

A woman civil engineer wrote from Leningrad: 'I saw your film, *Mirror*. I sat through to the end, despite the fact that after the first half hour I developed a severe headache as a result of my genuine efforts to analyse it, or just to have some idea of what was going on, of some connection between the characters and events and memories. . . . We poor cinema-goers see films that are good, bad, very bad, ordinary or highly original. But any of these one can understand, and be delighted or bored as the case may be; but this one?! . . .' An equipment engineer from Kalinin was also terribly indignant: 'Half an hour ago I came out of *Mirror*. Well!! . . . Comrade director! Have you seen it? I think there's something unhealthy about it. . .1 wish you every success in your work, but we don't need films like that.' And another engineer, this time from Sverdlovsk, was unable to contain his deep antipathy: 'How vulgar, what trash! Ugh, how revolting! Anyhow, I think your film's a blank shot. It certainly didn't reach the audience, which is all that matters . . .' This man even feels that the cinema administration should be called to account: 'One can only be astonished that those responsible for the distribution of films here in the USSR should allow such blunders.' In fairness to the cinema administration, I have to say that 'such blunders' were permitted very seldom—on average once every five years; and when I received letters like that I used to be thrown into despair: yes, indeed, who was I working for, and why?

I would be given some glimmer of hope by another kind of cinema-goer, full of puzzlement, but also expressing the genuine wish to understand what the writer had seen. For instance: 'I'm sure I'm not the first or the last to turn to you in bewilderment and ask you to help them make sense of *Mirror*. The episodes in themselves are really good, but how can one find what holds them together?' A woman wrote from Leningrad: 'The film is so unlike anything I've ever seen that I don't know how to go about it, how to appreciate either the form or the content. Can you explain? It's not that I lack understanding of cinema generally . . . I saw your earlier films, *Ivan's Childhood* and *Audrey Rublyov*. They were clear enough. But this is not. . . . Before the film is shown the audience should be given some sort of introduction. After seeing it one is left feeling cross with oneself for being so helpless and obtuse. With respect, Andrey, if you are not able to answer my letter in full, could you at least let me know where I could read something about the film? . . .'

Unfortunately I had nothing to advise such correspondents; no articles came out about *Mirror*, unless one counts the public condemnation of my film as inadmissibly 'elitist', made by my colleagues at a meeting of the State Institute of Cinematography and the Union of Cinematographists, and published in the journal, *Art of Cinema*.

What kept me going through all this, however, were the comments which clearly showed that there were people who minded about my work, and were actually waiting to see my films; only it was apparently in nobody's interests to further my contact with that section of the audience.

A member of the Institute of Physics of the Academy of Sciences sent me a notice published in their wall newspaper: 'The appearance of Tarkovsky's film, *Mirror* aroused wide interest in IPAS as it did all over Moscow.

'By no means all who wanted to meet the director were able to do so; nor, unfortunately, was the author of this notice. None of us can understand how Tarkovsky, by means of cinema, has succeeded in producing a work of such philosophical depths. Accustomed to films as story-line, action, characters and the usual "happy ending", the audience looks for these things in Tarkovsky's films, and often enough leaves disappointed.

'What is this film about? It is about a Man. No, not the particular man whose voice we hear from behind the screen, played by Innokentiy Smoktunovsky.' It's a film about you, your father, your grandfather, about someone who will live after you and who is still "you". About a Man who lives on the earth, is a part of the earth and the earth is a part of him, about the fact that a man is answerable for his life both to the past and to the future. You have to watch this film simply, and listen to the music of Bach and the poems of Arseniy Tarkovsky;[2] watch it as one watches the stars, or the sea, as one admires a landscape. There is no mathematical logic here, for it cannot explain what man is or what is the meaning of his life.'

I have to admit that even when professional critics praised my work I was often left unsatisfied and irritated by their ideas and comments—at least, I quite often had the feeling that these critics were either indifferent to my work or else not competent to criticise: so often they would use well-worn phrases taken from current cinema journalese instead of talking about the film's direct, intimate effect on the audience. But then 1 would meet people on

whom my film had made an impression, or I would receive letters from them which read like a kind of confession about their lives, and I would begin to understand what I was working for. I would be conscious of my vocation: duty and responsibility towards people, if you like. (I could never really believe that any artist could work only for himself, if he knew that what he was doing would never be needed by anybody . . . But more of that later . . .)

A woman wrote from Gorky: 'Thank you for *Mirror*. My childhood was like that. . . . Only how did you know about it?

'There was that wind, and the thunderstorm . . . "Galka, put the cat out," cried my Grandmother. . . . It was dark in the room . . . And the paraffin lamp went out, too, and the feeling of waiting for my mother to come back filled my entire soul . . . And how beautifully your film shows the awakening of a child's consciousness, of this thought! . . . And Lord, how true . . . we really don't know our mothers' faces. And how simple . . . You know, in that dark cinema, looking at a piece of canvas lit up by your talent, I felt for the first time in my life that I was not alone . . .'

I spent so many years being told that nobody wanted or understood my films, that a response like that warmed my very soul; it gave meaning to what I was doing and strengthened my conviction that I was right and that there was nothing accidental about the path I had chosen.

A worker in a Leningrad factory, an evening class student, wrote: 'My reason for writing is *Mirror,* a film I can't even talk about because I am living it.

'It's a great virtue to be able to listen and understand . . . That is, after all, a first principle of human relationships: the capacity to understand and forgive people their unintentional faults, their natural failures. If two people have been able to experience the same thing even once, they will be able to understand each other. Even if one lived in the era of the mammoth and the other in the age of electricity. And God grant that people may understand and experience only common, humane impulses—their own and those of others.'

Audiences defended and encouraged me: 'I am writing on behalf, and with the approval of, a group of cinema-goers of different professions, all acquaintances or friends of the writer of this letter.

'We want to let you know straight away that your well-wishers and the admirers of your talent, who await the appearance of every film you make, are far more numerous than might appear to be the case from the statistics in the journal, *Soviet Screen.* I don't have any comprehensive data, but not one of the wide circle of my acquaintance, or of their acquaintances, has ever answered a questionnaire about particular films. But they go to the cinema. Admittedly not often, but they always want to go to Tarkovsky films. It's a pity your films don't come out very often.'

I must admit it's a pity for me too. . . . Because there's so much I still want to do, so much to be said, so much to finish—and apparently I'm not the only one to whom it matters.

A teacher from Novosibirsk wrote: 'I've never written to an author to say what I feel about a book or a film. But this is a special case: the film itself lifts the spell of silence and enables one to free one's spirit from the anxieties and trivia that weigh it down. I went to a discussion of the film. "Physicists" and "Lyricists"* were unanimous: the film is compassionate, honest, relevant—all thanks to the author. And everyone who spoke said, "The film is about me.'"

Or again: 'This is from an old man, already retired, and interested in cinema even though my professional field had nothing to do with art (I'm a radio engineer).

'I am stunned by your film. Your gift for penetrating into the emotional world of adult and child; for making one feel the beauty of the world around one; showing the true, instead of the false, values of that world; making every object play a part; making every detail of the picture into a symbol; building up to a philosophical statement through an extraordinary economy of means; filling every frame with poetry and music. . . . All these qualities are typical of your style of exposition, and yours alone . . .

'I should very much like to read your own comments on your film. It's such a pity you seldom appear in print. I'm sure you have plenty to say! . . .'

To be honest I put myself in the category of people who are best able to give form to their ideas by arguing—I entirely subscribe to the view that truth is reached through dispute. Otherwise I tend to fall into a reflective state which suits the metaphysical bent of my character and is not conducive to an energetic, creative thought

* An expression coined in the late 1950s, referring to the debate between those who question the relevance of art to the modern age and those who see beauty as one of man's fundamental needs, and sensibility as among his most important qualities. (Tr.)

process, since it affords only emotional material with which to construct a—more or less well-ordered—framework for my ideas.

One way and another it was contact with audiences, by letter or in person, that pushed me in the direction of this book. In any case 1 shan't for a moment blame those who question my decision to embark on abstract problems, any more than I shall be surprised to find an enthusiastic response on the part of other readers.

A working woman from Novosibirsk wrote: 'I've seen your film four times in the last week. And I didn't go simply to sec it, but in order to spend just a few hours living a real life with real artists and real people. . . . Everything that torments me, everything I don't have and that I long for, that makes me indignant, or sick, or suffocates me, everything that gives me a feeling of light and warmth, and by which I live, and everything that destroys me—it's all there in your film, I see it as if in a mirror. For the first time ever a film has become something real for me, and that's why I go to see it, I want to get right inside it, so that I can really be *alive.'*

One surely couldn't hope for greater understanding. My most fervent wish has always been to be able to speak out in my films, to say everything with total sincerity and without imposing my own point of view on others. But if your vision of the world turns out to be one that other people recognise as a part of themselves what better motivation could there be for one's work. One woman sent me on a letter written to her by her daughter, and the young girl's words are a remarkable statement about artistic creation as an infinitely versatile and subtle form of communication:

' . . . How many words does a person know?' she asks her mother. 'How many does he use in his everyday vocabulary? One hundred, two, three? We wrap our feelings up in words, try to express in words sorrow and joy and any sort of emotion, the very things that can't in fact be expressed. Romeo uttered beautiful words to Juliet, vivid, expressive words, but they surely didn't say even half of what made his heart feel as if it was ready to jump out of his chest, and stopped him breathing, and made Juliet forget everything except her love?

'There's another kind of language, another form of communication: by means of feeling, and images. That is the contact that stops people being separated from each other, that brings down barriers. Will, feeling, emotion—these remove obstacles from between people who otherwise stand on opposite sides of a mirror, on opposite sides of a door. . . . The frames of the screen move out, and the world which used to be partitioned off comes into us, becomes something real . . . And this doesn't happen through little Audrey, it's Tarkovsky himself addressing the audience directly, as they sit on *the other side* of the screen. There's no death, there is immortality. Time is one and undivided, as it says in one of the poems. "At the table are great-grandfathers and grandchildren . . ."Actually Mum, I've taken the film entirely from an emotional angle, but I'm sure there could be a different way of looking at it. What about you? Do write and tell me please . . .'

This book was taking shape all through my period of unemployment, an interlude which I have now forcibly brought to an end by changing my life; it is intended neither to teach people nor to impose my point of view on them. Its main purpose is to help me to find my way through the maze of possibilities contained in this young and beautiful art form—still, in essence, so little explored—in order to be able to find myself, fully and independently, within it.

Artistic creation, after all, is not subject to absolute laws, valid from age to age; since it is related to the more general aim of mastery of the world, it has an infinite number of facets, the vincula that connect man with his vital activity; and even if the path towards knowledge is unending, no step that takes man nearer to a full understanding of the meaning of his existence can be too small to count.

The corpus of theory relating to cinema is still slight; the clarification of even minor points can help to throw light on its basic laws. This is what has prompted me to put forward a few of my own ideas.

CHAPTER I

The beginning

The completion of *Ivan's Childhood* marked the end of one cycle of my life, and of a process that I saw as a kind of self-determination.

It was made up of study at the Institute of Cinematography, work on a short film for my diploma, and then eight months' work on my first feature film.

I could now assess the experience of *Ivan's Childhood*, accept the need to work out clearly, albeit temporarily, my own position in the aesthetics of cinema, and set myself problems which might be solved in the course of making my next film: in all of this I saw a pledge of my advance onto new ground. The work could all have been done in my head. But there is a certain danger in not having to reach final conclusions: it's all too easy to be satisfied with glimmers of intuition, rather than sound, coherent reasoning.

The wish to avoid expending my reflections in such a way made it easier for me to take up pencil and paper.

What attracted me to Bogomolov's' short story, *Ivan?*

I have to say at the outset that not all prose can be transferred to the screen,

Some works have a wholeness, and are endowed with a precise and original literary image; characters are drawn in unfathomable depths; the composition has an extraordinary capacity for enchantment, and the book is indivisible; through the pages comes the astonishing, unique personality of the author: books like that are masterpieces, and only someone who is actually indifferent both to fine prose and to the cinema can conceive the urge to screen them.

It is all the more important to emphasise this point now, when the time has come for literature to be separated, once and for all, from cinema.

Other prose works are made by ideas, by clarity and firmness of structure, by originality of theme; such writing seems not to be concerned with the aesthetic development of the thought it contains. I think Bogomolov's *Ivan* is in this category.

Purely artistically, I derived little joy from the detached, detailed, leisurely narrative with its lyrical digressions to bring out the character of the hero, Lieutenant Galtsev. Bogomolov attaches great importance to the accuracy of his record of army life and to the fact that he was, or tried to appear, a witness of all that happened in his story.

All this made it easier for me to see the work as prose that could readily be filmed. Moreover, filming might give it that aesthetic intensity of feeling which would transform the idea of the story into a truth endorsed by life.

After I had read it, Bogomolov's tale stuck in my mind; indeed, certain things in it impressed me deeply.

First there was the fate of the hero, which we follow right up to his death. Of course many other plots have been constructed in this way, but it is by no means always the case, as it is with *Ivan,* that the *denouement* is inherent in the conception and comes about through its own inner necessity.

Here the hero's death has a particular significance. At the point where, with other authors, there would have been a comforting

follow-up, this story ends. Nothing follows. Usually in such situations an author will reward his hero for his military exploits. All that is hard and cruel recedes into the past. It turns out to have been merely a painful stage in his life.

In Bogomolov's story, this stage, cut off by death, becomes the final and only one. Within it is concentrated the entire content of Kan's life, its tragic motive power. There is no room for anything else: that was the startling feet that made one unexpectedly and acutely aware of the monstrousness of war.

The next thing that struck me was the fact that this austere war talc- was not about violent military clashes, or the ins and outs of reversals at the front. Accounts of exploits were missing. The stuff of the narrative was not the heroics of reconnaissance operations, but the interval between two missions. The author had charged this interval with a disturbing, pent-up intensity reminiscent of the cramped tension of a coiled spring that has been tightened to the limit.

This approach to the depiction of war was persuasive because of its hidden cinematic potential. It opened up possibilities for recreating in a new way the true atmosphere of war, with its hyper-tense nervous concentration, invisible on the surface of events but making itself felt like a rumbling beneath the ground.

A third thing moved me to the bottom of my heart: the personality of the young boy. He immediately struck me as a character that had been destroyed, shifted off its axis by the war. Something incalculable, indeed, all the attributes of childhood, had gone irretrievably out of his life. And the thing he had acquired, like an evil gift from the war, in place of what had been his own, was concentrated and heightened within him.

His character moved me by its intensely dramatic quality, which 1 found far more convincing than those personalities which are revealed in the gradual process of human development, through situations of conflict and clashes of principle.

In a non-developing, constant state of tension, passions reach the highest possible pitch, and manifest themselves more vividly and convincingly than in a gradual process of change. It is this predilection of mine that makes me so fond of Dostoievsky, for me the most interesting characters are outwardly static, but inwardly charged with energy by an overriding passion.

Ivan turned out to be a character of this kind. And when I read Bogomolov's story these things took hold of my imagination.

However, that was as far as I could go with the author. The emotional texture of the story was alien to me. Events were related in a deliberately restrained style, almost in the tone of a report. I could not have transferred such a style to the screen, it would have been against my principles.

When a writer and a director have different aesthetic starting-points, compromise is impossible. It will destroy the very conception of the film. The film will not happen.

When such a conflict occurs there is only one way out: to transform the literary scenario into a new fabric, which at a certain stage in the making of the film will come to be called the shooting script. And in the course of work on this script, the author of the film (not of the script but of the film) is entitled to turn the literary scenario this way or that as he wants. All that matters is that his vision should be whole, and that every word of the script should be dear to him and have passed through his own creative experience. For among the piles of written pages, and the actors, and the places chosen for location, and even the most brilliant dialogue, and the artist's sketches, there stands only one person: the director, and he alone, as the last filter in the creative process of film-making.

Whenever script writer and director are not the same person, therefore, we shall witness an insoluble contradiction that is, of course, if they are artists of integrity. That was why I saw the content of the story merely as a possible basis, the vital essence of which would have to be reinterpreted in the light of my own vision of the finished film.

Here we come up against the question of how far a director is entitled to be a screen-writer. Some would categorically deny him the right ever to engage in script writing at all. Directors given to writing scenarios tend to be sharply criticised, even though it is obvious enough that some writers feel themselves to be further from the cinema than film directors. The implication of such an attitude is therefore somewhat bizarre: *all* writers are entitled to write screen-plays, but *no* director is. He has meekly to accept the text offered him and cut it up to make it into a shooting script,

But to return to our theme: I find poetic links, the logic of poetry in cinema, extraordinarily pleasing. They seem to me perfectly appropriate to the potential of cinema as the most truthful and poetic of art forms. Certainly I am more at home with them than with traditional theatrical writing which links images through the linear,

rigidly logical development of the plot. That sort of fussily correct way of linking events usually involves arbitrarily forcing them into sequence in obedience to some abstract notion of order. And even when this is not so, even when the plot is governed by the characters, one finds that the links which hold it together rest on a facile interpretation of life's complexities.

But film material can be joined together in another way, which works above all to lay open the logic of a person's thought. This is the rationale that will dictate the sequence of events, and the editing which forms them into a whole. The birth and development of thought are subject to laws of their own, and sometimes demand forms of expression which are quite different from the patterns of logical speculation. In my view poetic reasoning is closer to the laws by which thought develops, and thus to life itself, than is the logic of traditional drama. And yet it is the methods of classical drama which have been regarded as the only models, and which for years have defined the form in which dramatic conflict is expressed.

Through poetic connections feeling is heightened and the spectator is made more active. He becomes a participant in the process of discovering life, unsupported by ready-made deductions from the plot or ineluctable pointers by the author. He has at his disposal only what helps to penetrate to the deeper meaning of the complex phenomena represented in front of him. Complexities of thought and poetic visions of the world do not have to be thrust into the framework of the patently obvious. The usual logic, that of linear sequentiality, is uncomfortably like the proof of a geometry theorem. As a method it is incomparably less fruitful artistically than the possibilities opened up by associative linking, which allows for an affective as well as a rational appraisal. And how wrong it is that the cinema makes so little use of the latter mode, which has so much to offer. It possesses an inner power which is concentrated within the image and comes across to the audience in the form of feelings, inducing tension in direct response to the author's narrative logic.

When less than everything has been said about a subject, you can still think on further. The alternative is for the audience to be presented with a final deduction, for no effort on their part, and that is not what they need. What can it mean to them when they have not shared with the author the misery and joy of bringing an image into being?

There is another advantage in our approach. The method whereby the artist obliges the audience to build the separate parts into a whole, and to think on, further than has been stated, is the only one that puts the audience on a par with the artist in their perception of the film. And indeed from the point of view of mutual respect only that kind of reciprocity is worthy of artistic practice.

When I speak of poetry I am not thinking of it as a genre. Poetry is an awareness of the world, a particular way of relating to reality. So poetry becomes a philosophy to guide a man throughout his life. Think of the fate and character of an artist like Alexander Grin,[4] who when he was dying of hunger went off into the mountains with a home-made bow and arrow to shoot some sort of game. Relate that incident to the times the man was living in—the 1930s—and the correlation will reveal the tragic figure of a dreamer.

Or the fate of Van Gogh.

Think of Mandelstam, think of Pasternak, Chaplin, Dovzhenko,[5] Mizoguchi[6] and you'll realise what tremendous emotional power is carried by these exalted figures who soar above the earth, in whom the artist appears not just as an explorer of life, but as one who creates great spiritual treasures and that special beauty which is subject only to poetry. Such an artist can discern the lines of the poetic design of being. He is capable of going beyond the limitations of coherent logic, and conveying the deep complexity and truth of the impalpable connections and hidden phenomena of life.

Without such perception, even a work that purports to be true to life will seem artificially uniform and simplistic. An artist may achieve an outward illusion, a life-like effect, but that is not at all the same as examining life beneath the surface.

I think in fact that unless there is an organic link between the subjective impressions of the author and his objective representation of reality, he will not achieve even superficial credibility, let alone authenticity and inner truth.

You can play a scene with documentary precision, dress the characters correctly to the point of naturalism, have all the details exactly like real life, and the picture that emerges in consequence will still be nowhere near reality, it will seem utterly artificial, that is, not faithful to life, even though artificiality was precisely what the author was trying to avoid.

Curiously enough the label 'artificial' is applied in art to what unquestionably belongs to our ordinary, everyday perception of

reality. The explanation is that the pattern of life is far more poetic than it is sometimes represented by the determined advocates of naturalism. So much, after all, remains in our thoughts and hearts as unrealised suggestion. Instead of attempting to capture these nuances, most unpretentious 'true-to-life' films not only ignore them but make a point of using sharp, overstated images which at best can only make the picture seem far-fetched. And I am all for cinema being as close as possible to life—even if on occasion we have failed to see how beautiful life really is.

At the beginning of this chapter I said I was glad to see signs of a watershed forming between cinema and literature, which both exercise such a strong and beneficial influence on each other. As it develops, the cinema will, I think, move further away not only from literature but also from other adjacent art forms, and thus become more and more autonomous. The process is less rapid than one might wish; it is long drawn out, and the tempo is not constant. That explains why the cinema still retains some principles proper to other art forms, on which directors often base themselves when making a film. Gradually these principles have come to act as a brake on cinema, as an obstacle to its realising its own specific character. One result is that cinema then loses something of its capacity for incarnating reality directly and by its own means, as opposed to transmuting life with the help of literature, painting or theatre.

This can be seen for instance in the influence brought to bear on cinema by the visual arts when attempts are made to transfer this or that canvas to the screen. For the most part, isolated principles are transposed, and whether these are of composition or of colour, the artistic realisation will not be that of an original, independent creation: it can only be derivative.

Trying to adapt the features of other art forms to the screen will always deprive the film of what is distinctively cinematic, and make it harder to handle the material in a way that makes use of the powerful resources of cinema as an art in its own right. But above all such a procedure sets up a barrier between the author of the film and life. Methods established by the older art forms interpose themselves. It specifically prevents life from being recreated in the cinema as a person feels it and sees it: in other words, authentically.

We've come to the end of the day: let us say that in the course of that day something important has happened, something significant, the sort of thing that could be the inspiration for a film, that has the

Ivan's Childhood
Ivan draws up a report for Colonel Gryaznov.

Ivan's Childhood
Still from Ivan's dream.

makings of a conflict of ideas that could become a picture. But how did this day imprint itself on our memory?

As something amorphous, vague, with no skeleton or schema. Like a cloud. And only the central event of that day has become concentrated, like a detailed report, lucid in meaning and clearly defined. Against the background of the rest of the day, that event stands out like a tree in the mist. (Of course the comparison is not quite exact, because what I've called mist and cloud are not homogeneous.) Isolated impressions of the day have set off impulses within us, evoked associations; objects and circumstances have stayed in our memory, but with no sharply defined contours, incomplete, apparently fortuitous. Can these impressions of life be conveyed through film? They undoubtedly can; indeed it is the especial virtue of cinema, as the most realistic of the arts, to be the means of such communication.

Of course such reproduction of real-life sensations is not an end in itself: but it can be given meaning aesthetically, and so become a medium for deep and serious thought.

To be faithful to life, intrinsically truthful, a work has for me to be at once an exact factual account and a true communication of feelings.

You were walking along the street and your eyes met those of someone who went past you. There was something startling in his look, it gave you a feeling of apprehension. He influenced you psychologically, put you in a certain frame of mind.

If all you do is reproduce the conditions of that meeting with mechanical accuracy, dressing the actors and choosing the spot for shooting with documentary precision, you still won't achieve the same sensation from the film sequence as you had from the meeting itself. For when you filmed the scene of the meeting you ignored the psychological factor, your own mental state which caused the stranger's look to affect you with that particular emotion. And so for the stranger's look to startle the audience as it did you at the time, you have to prepare for it by building up a mood similar to your own at the moment of the actual meeting.

This means additional work by the director and additional script material.

A vast number of cliches and commonplaces, nurtured by centuries of theatre, have unfortunately also found a resting-place in the cinema. I commented earlier on drama and the logic of film narrative. To be more specific, and to clarify exactly what I mean, it's worth looking for a moment at the concept of mise *en scene;* because I think it is in the handling of *mise en scene* that an arid, formal approach to the problem of expression and expressiveness is most obvious. And if we set ourselves the task of comparing *mise en scene* in film and in the vision of the writer, a few examples will be sufficient to show how formalism affects the film set.

People tend to think that an effective *mise en scene* is simply one that expresses the idea, the point, of the scene and its subtext. (Eisenstein himself was a protagonist of this view.) That is supposed to ensure that the scene will be given the depths that the meaning requires.

Such an attitude is simplistic. It has given rise to a good many irrelevant conventions which do violence to the living texture of the artistic image.

As we know, *mise en scene* is a design made up of the disposition of the actors in relation to each other and to the setting. In real life we can be struck by the way an episode takes on a *'mise en scene'* which makes for the utmost expressiveness. On seeing it we might exclaim with delight, 'You couldn't think of that if you tried!' What is it that we find so arresting? The incongruity of the 'composition' in relation to what is happening. It is in fact the absurdity of the *mise en scene* that catches our imagination; but this absurdity is only apparent. It covers something of great significance which gives the *mise en scene* that quality of absolute conviction which makes us believe in the event.

The point is that it is no good by-passing the difficulties and bringing everything down to a simplistic level; therefore it is crucial that *mise en scene,* rather than illustrating some idea, should follow life—the personalities of the characters and their psychological state. Its purpose must not be reduced to elaborating on the meaning of a conversation or an action. Its function is to startle us with the authenticity of the actions and the beauty and depths of the artistic images—not by obtrusive illustration of their meaning. As is so often the case, undue emphasis on ideas can only restrict the spectator's imagination, forming a kind of thought ceiling beyond which there yawns a vacuum. It doesn't safeguard the frontiers of thought, it simply makes it harder to penetrate into its depths.

Examples are not hard to find. One only has to think of the endless fences, railings and lattices that separate lovers. Another heavy-handed variation is the monumental clanging panorama of a huge building site, the mission of which is to bring some erring egotist back to his senses and imbue him with a love of labour and the working class. No *mise en scene* has the right to be repeated, just as no two personalities are ever the same. As soon as a *mise en scene* turns into a sign, a cliche, a concept (however original it may be), then the whole thing—characters, situations, psychology—become schematic and false.

Look at the finale of Dostoievsky's *The Idiot.* What overwhelming truth in the characters and circumstances! As Rogozhin and Myshkin, their knees touching, sit there on chairs in that enormous room, they astound us by the combination of an outwardly absurd and senseless *mise en scene* with the perfect veracity of their own inner state. The refusal to weigh the scene down with obtrusive thoughts is what makes it as compelling as life itself. Yet how readily a *mise en scene* constructed without any obvious *idea* is regarded as formalistic.

Often the director himself is so determined to be portentous that he loses all sense of measure and will ignore the true meaning of a human action, turning it into a vessel for the idea he wants to emphasise. But one has to observe life at first hand, not to make do with the banalities of a hollow counterfeit constructed for the sake of acting and of screen expressiveness. I think the truth of these remarks would be borne out if we were to ask our friends to tell us, for

instance, of deaths which they themselves have witnessed: I'm sure we should be amazed by the details of those scenes, by the individual reactions of the people concerned, above all by the incongruity of it all—and, if you will forgive the blasphemy, by the expressiveness of those deaths.

My private polemic with the pseudo-expressive *mise en scene* made me think of two incidents I've been told about. They could not have been made up, they are truth itself—which distinguishes them sharply from what is known as 'thinking in images'.

A group of soldiers is being shot for treason in front of the ranks. They are waiting among the puddles by a hospital wall. It's autumn. They are ordered to take off their coats and boots. One of them spends a long time walking about among the puddles, in his socks which are full of holes, looking for a dry place to put down the coat and boots which a minute later he will no longer need.

Again. A man is run over by a tram and has his leg cut off. They prop him up against the wall of a house and he sits there, under the shameless gaze of a gawping crowd, and waits for the ambulance to arrive. Suddenly he can't bear it any longer, takes a handkerchief out of his pocket, and lays it over the stump of his leg.

Expressive, indeed.

Of course it's not a question of collecting real incidents of that kind as it were against a rainy clay. What we are talking about is being faithful to the truth of the characters and circumstances rather than to the superficial appeal of 'images' thought up for the occasion. Unfortunately further difficulties tend to arise in any theoretical discussion in this area because of the abundance of terms and labels which serve merely to obscure the meaning of what is said and compound confusion on the theoretical front.

The true artistic image is always based on the organic unity of idea and form. Indeed, any imbalance between form and concept will preclude the creation of an artistic image, for the work will remain outside the realm of art.

I did not start making *Ivan's Childhood* with any of these ideas in mind. They developed as a result of working on the film. And much that is clear to me now still lay far ahead of me at the time I began filming.

Of course, my point of view is subjective—thank God! In his work the artist breaks down reality in the prism of his perception and that is precisely why he is able to see so many different sides of

reality in the foreshortening effects which are his and his alone. In setting great store by the subjective view of the artist and his personal perception of the world, however, I am not making a plea for an arbitrary or anarchic approach. It is a question of world view, of ideals and moral ends.

Masterpieces are born of the artist's struggle to express his ethical ideals. Indeed, his concepts and his sensibilities are informed by those ideals. If he loves life, has an overwhelming need to know it, change it, try to make it better, — in short, if he aims to cooperate in enhancing the value of life, then there is no danger in the fact that the picture of reality will have passed through a filter of his subjective concepts, through his states of mind. For his work will always be a spiritual endeavour which aspires to make man more perfect: an image of the world that captivates us by its harmony of feeling and thought, its nobility and restraint.

As I see it then, if you stand on firm moral ground there is no need to shy away from greater freedom in your choice of means. Moreover, that freedom need not necessarily be restricted to a clear plan which obliges you to choose between certain methods. You also have to be able to trust solutions which present themselves spontaneously. Obviously it is important that these should not put the audience off by being overcomplex. This, however, is not something to be gauged by deliberations about what devices to ban or allow in your film, but through the experience gained by looking at the excesses that found their way into your early productions and which have to be eliminated naturally as your work proceeds.

In making my first film I hoped, quite simply, to establish whether or not I had it in me to be a director. In order to come to a definite conclusion I left the reins slack, as it were. If the film turns out well, I thought, then I'll have the right to work in the cinema. *Ivan's Childhood* was therefore specially important. It was my qualifying examination.

All this is not to say that 1 made the film as a kind of unstructured exercise, merely that I tried not to hold myself back. I found myself having to rely on my own taste and have faith in the competence of my aesthetic choices. On the basis of making the film I had to establish what I could count upon in the future, and what would not stand the test.

Now, of course, I hold different views on many things. Afterwards it became clear that little of what I discovered actually had life in it,

and I have since abandoned many of the conclusions I reached then.

While we were making the film it was instructive for us, the team, to work out the stylistic texture of the sets, of the landscape, transmuting the non-dialogue sections of the script into the specific locale of scenes and episodes. Bogomolov describes the settings with the enviable thoroughness of one who witnessed the events which form the basis for the story. The author's one guiding principle was the detailed reconstruction of all the places, as if he had seen them with his own eyes.

The result seemed to me fragmented and lifeless: bushes on the enemy-occupied bank; Galtsev's dug-out with its dark lines of beams, and, identical to it, the battalion first aid post; the dreary front line drawn up along the river bank; the trenches. All these places are described with great precision, but not only did they arouse no aesthetic feelings in me, they were somehow uncongenial. These surroundings were not such as to awake emotions appropriate to the whole story of Ivan as I pictured it. I felt all the time that for the film to be a success the texture of the scenery and the landscapes must fill me with definite memories and poetic associations. Now, more than twenty years later, I am firmly convinced of one thing (not that it can be analysed): that if an author is moved by the landscape chosen, if it brings back memories to him and suggests associations, even subjective ones, then this will in turn affect the audience with particular excitement. Episodes redolent of the author's own mood

include the birch wood, the camouflage of birch branches on the first aid post, and the landscape in the background of the last dream and the flooded dead forest.

All four dreams, too, arc based on quite specific associations. The first, for instance, from start to finish, right up to the words, 'Mum, there's a cuckoo!' is one of my earliest childhood recollections. It was at the time when I was just beginning to know the world. I was four.

Generally people's memories arc precious to them. It is no accident that they are coloured by poetry. The most beautiful memories are those of childhood. Of course memory has to be worked upon before it can become the basis of an artistic reconstruction of the past; and here it is important not to lose the particular emotional atmosphere without which a memory evoked in every detail merely gives rise to a bitter feeling of disappointment. There's an enormous difference, after all, between the way you remember the house in which you were born and which you haven't seen for years, and the actual sight of the house after a prolonged absence. Usually the poetry of the memory is destroyed by confrontation with its origin.

It occurred to me then, that from these properties of memory a new working principle could be developed, on which an extraordinarily interesting film might be built. Outwardly the pattern of events, of the hero's actions and behaviour, would be disturbed. It would be the story of his thoughts, his memories and dreams. And then, without his appearing at all—at least in the accepted sense of the traditionally written film—it would be possible to achieve something highly significant: the expression, the portrayal, of the hero's individual personality, and the revelation of his interior world. Somewhere here there is an echo of the image of the lyrical hero incarnate in literature, and of course in poetry; he is absent from view, but what he thinks, how he thinks, and what he thinks about build up a graphic and clearly-defined picture of him. This subsequently became the starting-point of *Mirror*.

The way to this poetic logic, however, is fraught with adversity. Opposition awaits you at every turn, despite the fact that the principle in question is quite as legitimate as that of the logic of literature or dramaturgy; it is simply that a different component becomes the main element in the construction. One is reminded here of that sad dictum of Hermann Hesse: 'A poet is something you are allowed to be, but not allowed to become.'

Working on *Ivan's Childhood* we encountered protests from the film authorities every time we tried to replace narrative causality with *>. poetic articulations. And yet we were moving quite tentatively, still only feeling our way. There was no question of revising the basic working principles of film-making. But whenever the dramatic structure showed the slightest sign of something new—of treating the rationale of everyday life relatively freely—it was met with cries of protest and incomprehension. These mostly cited the audience: they had to have a plot that unfolded without a break, they were not capable of watching a screen if the film did not have a strong story-line. The contrasts in our film—cuts from dreams to reality, or, conversely, from the last scene in the crypt to victory day in Berlin—seemed to many to be inadmissible. I was delighted to learn that audiences thought differently.

There are some aspects of human life that can only be faithfully represented through poetry. But this is where directors very often try to use clumsy, conventional gimmickry instead of poetic logic. I'm thinking of the illusionism and extraordinary effects involved in dreams, memories and fantasies. All too often film dreams are made into a collection of old-fashioned filmic tricks, and cease to be a phenomenon of life.

Faced with the necessity of shooting dreams, we had to decide how to come close to the particular poetry of the dream, how to express it, what means to use. This was not something that could be decided in the abstract. Casting around for an answer we tried out several practical possibilities, using associations and vague guesses. Quite unexpectedly it occurred to us to have negative images in the third dream. In our mind's eye we glimpsed black sunlight sparkling through snowy trees and a downpour of gleaming rain. Flashes of lightning came in to make it technically feasible to cut from positive to negative. But all this merely created an atmosphere of unreality. What about the content? What about the logic of the dream? That came from memories. I remembered seeing the wet grass, the lorry load of apples, the horses, wet with rain, steaming in the sunshine. All this material found its way into the film straight from life, not through the medium of contiguous visual arts. Looking for simple solutions to the problem of conveying the unreality of the dream we hit on the panorama of moving trees in negative, and, against that background, the face of the little girl passing in front of the camera three times, her expression changed with each appearance. We

Ivan's Childhood
Memories of peacetime: 'a cartload of apples, and hones, wet with rain, gleaming in the sun.

wanted to capture in that scene a foreboding of imminent tragedy. The last scene of the dream was deliberately shot near water, on the beach, in order to link it with the last dream of Ivan.

Returning to the question of the choice of locale, it has to be said that our failures occurred precisely at those points in the film where associations suggested by the experience of specific places were pushed out by a piece of fiction or as a result of meekly following the script. That was what happened to the scene with the crazy old man and the burnt-out ruin. I don't mean the content of the scene but its plastic realisation. At first the scene had been envisaged differently.

We pictured an abandoned field, swollen with the rains, with a muddy, waterlogged road running over it.

Along the roadside—stumpy, autumnal white willows.

There was no burnt-out ruin.

Only far away on the horizon stood a solitary chimney.

There had to be a feeling of loneliness hanging over it all. A scraggy cow was harnessed to the cart carrying Ivan and the old

madman. (The cow was from E. Kapiyev's memoirs of the front.) A rooster was sitting on the floor of the cart, and some heavy object lay there wrapped up in dirty matting. When the Colonel's car drove up Ivan ran away over the field, as far as the horizon, and Kholin had to spend a long time chasing him, barely managing to drag his boots out of the clinging mud. Then the Dodge drove off, and the old man was left alone. The wind raised a flap of the matting to show a rusty plough lying in the cart. The scene was to have been filmed in long, slow shots, and thus to have quite a different rhythm.

Not that I settled for the other version for reasons of efficiency. There happened to be two versions and I didn't realise until later that I had chosen the less good of the two.

There are other unsuccessful passages in the film of the kind that arise as a rule when the moment of recognition is not there for the author and is therefore equally lacking for the audience. I spoke of this earlier, in connection with the poetics of memory. One instance is the shot of Ivan walking through the columns of troops and army vehicles, when he is running away to join the partisans. The scene awakes no feelings in me, and so the audience can experience none in response. For the same reason the conversation beween Ivan and

Colonel Gryaznov in the reconnaissance section is only partially successful. The interior is indifferent and neutral, despite the dynamic of the boy's excitement. And only the medium shot of the soldiers working below the window brings in an element of life, becomes the stuff of associations, of thought that goes beyond what is stated.

Scenes like this, which have no inherent meaning, which the author has failed to illuminate, obtrude as something alien, they break out from the compositional mould of the film.

All this proves yet again that cinema, like any other art, is created by the author. What the director can be given by his colleagues in the course of their work together is inestimable; but all the same it is his conception alone that finally gives the film its unity. Only what has been broken clown in his subjective, author's vision will become the stuff of art and will go to make up that distinctive, complex world which reflects a true picture of reality. Naturally his unique position does not lessen the enormous value of the contribution brought to the work by all the other members of the team; but even in this interdependence the others' ideas only actually enhance the work when the director knows how to choose between them. Otherwise the wholeness of the work is destroyed.

A major part of the responsibility for the success of our film belongs to the actors, particularly Kolya Burlyavev, Valya Malyavina, Zhcnya Zharikov, Valentin Zubkov. Many of them were filming for the first time, but they performed with great seriousness.

I had noticed Kolya, the future Ivan, when I was still a student. It is no exaggeration to say that my acquaintance with him decided my attitude to the filming of *Ivan's Childhood.* The rigid deadline precluded any serious search for an actor to play Ivan, and I was constrained by a tight budget as a result of some unsatisfactory initial work on the film, carried out with a different team. However, other guarantees of the film's viability were to hand in the persons of Kolya, camera-man Vadim Yusov, composer Vyacheslav Ovchinnikov, and set designer Evgeny Chernyayev; these made me persist with the filming.

Everything about the actress Valya Malyavina was at variance with Bogomolov's portrait of the nurse. In the story she is a fat, blonde girl with a high bosom and blue eyes. Valya was like a negative of Bogomolov's nurse: dark hair, hazel eyes, boyish torso. But with all that she had something original, individual, unex-

pected, which had not been in the story. And this was far more important, more complex, it could explain a lot about Masha and was full of promise. So there was another moral guarantee.

The kernel of Valya's acting persona was vulnerability. She looked so naive, pure, trusting that it was immediately clear that Masha-Valya was completely defenceless in the face of this war which was nothing to do with her. Vulnerability was the key-note of her nature and of her age. Everything active in her, all that should determine her attitude to life, was still in an embryonic state. This allowed the relationship between her and Captain Kholin to build up naturally, because he was disarmed by her defencelessness. Zubkov, who played Kholin, found himself totally dependent on his partner, and whereas with another actress his behaviour might have seemed artificial and edifying, with her it was utterly genuine.

These comments are not to be taken as the platform from which *Ivan's Childhood* was launched. They arc simply an attempt to explain to myself the thoughts that came up in the course of the work, and how these formed themselves into some sort of system.

The experience of working on the film helped to form my views. Subsequently these were reinforced by writing *The Passion of Andrey,* the scenario for the film about the life of Andrey Rublyov, which 1 completed in 1966.

After writing the screenplay I was very doubtful about whether it would be possible to produce the film. In any case I knew it would certainly not be a historical or biographical work. I was interested in something else: I wanted to investigate the nature of the poetic genius of the great Russian painter. I wanted to use the example of Rublyov to explore the question of the psychology of artistic creativity, and analyse the mentality and civic awareness of an artist who created spiritual treasures of timeless significance.

The film was to show how the national yearning for brotherhood, at a time of vicious internecine fighting and the Tartar yoke, gave birth to Rublyov's inspired 'Trinity'—epitomising the ideal of brotherhood, love and quiet sanctity. Such was the artistic and philosophical basis of the screenplay.

It was written in separate episodes—novellas—in which Rublyov himself did not always figure. Even when he was not present, however, there had to be an awareness of the life lived by his spirit; one had to breathe the atmosphere which informed his relations with the world. These novellas are not connected by a traditional chronological line, but by the poetic logic of the need for Rublyov to paint his celebrated 'Trinity'. The episodes, each with its own particular plot and theme, draw their unity from that logic. They develop in interaction with each other, through the inner conflict inherent in the poetic logic of their sequence in the screenplay: a kind of visual manifestation of the contradictions and complexities of life and of artistic creativity . . .

As for the historical side, we wanted to make the film as if we were dealing with a contemporary. And so the historical facts, people, artifacts, had to be seen not as the stuff of future memorials, but as something living, breathing, even everyday.

Props, costumes, utensils—we didn't want to look at any of these things with the eye of the historian, the archaeologist, or the ethnographer, collecting museum exhibits. A chair had to be an object on which to sit, not a rare antique.

The actors had to play the parts of characters they understood, essentially subject to the same feeling as people living now. We wanted to do away once and for all with the tradition of the buskins onto which the actor in the historical film usually clambers, and which, by the time the end is in sight, have imperceptibly turned into stilts. I felt that all of this was essential for optimum results. I was determined to realise this film with the collective forces of the team that had already proved itself in battle: Yusov as camera-man, Chernyayev as art director, and Ovchinnikov to write the music.

I shall conclude this chapter by revealing the clandestine aim of the book: my hope is that those readers whom I manage to convince, if not entirely then at least in part, may become my kindred spirits, if only in recognition of the fact that I have no secrets from them.

CHAPTER II

Art—a yearning for the ideal

Before going on to the particular problems of the nature of cinematic art, I feel it is important to define my understanding of the ultimate aim of art as such. Why docs art exist? Who needs it? Indeed docs anybody need it? These are questions asked not only by the poet, but also by anyone who appreciates art—or, in that current expression all too symptomatic of the twentieth-century relationship between art and its audience—the 'consumer'.

Many ask themselves that question, and anyone connected with art gives his own particular answer. Alexander Blok[8] said that 'the poet creates harmony out of chaos.'. . . Pushkin believed the poet had the gift of prophecy. . . . Every artist is ruled by his own laws but these are by no means compulsory for anyone else.

In any case it is perfectly clear that the goal for all art—unless of course it is aimed at the 'consumer', like a saleable commodity—is to explain to the artist himself and to those around him what man lives for, what is the meaning of his existence. To explain to people the reason for their appearance on this planet; or if not to explain, at least to pose the question.

To start with the most general consideration, it is worth saying that the indisputably functional role of art lies in the idea of *knowing,* where the effect is expressed as shock, as catharsis.

From the very moment when Eve ate the apple from the tree of knowledge, mankind was doomed to strive endlessly after the truth. First, as we know, Adam and Eve discovered they were naked. And they were ashamed. They were ashamed because they had understood; and then they set out on their way in the joy of knowing one another. That was the beginning of a journey that has no end. One can understand how dramatic that moment was for those two souls, just emerged from the state of placid ignorance and thrown out into the vastness of the earth, hostile and inexplicable.

'With the sweat of thy brow shalt thou earn thy bread . . .'

So it was that man, 'nature's crown', arrived on the earth in order to *know* why it was that he had appeared or been sent.

And with man's help the Creator comes to know himself. This progress has been given the name of evolution, and it is accompanied by the agonising process of human self-knowledge.

In a very real sense every individual experiences this process for himself as he comes to know life, himself, his aims. Of course each person uses the sum of knowledge accumulated by humanity, but all the same the experience of ethical, moral self-knowledge is the only aim in life for each person, and, subjectively, it is experienced each time as something new. Again and again man correlates himself with the world, racked with longing to acquire, and become one with, the ideal which lies outside him, which he apprehends as some kind of intuitively sensed first principle. The unattainability of that becoming one, the inadequacy of his own I, is the perpetual source of man's dissatisfaction and pain.

And so art, like science, is a means of assimilating the world, an instrument for knowing it in the course of man's journey towards what is called 'absolute truth'.

That, however, is the end of any similarity between these two embodiments of the creative human spirit, in which man does not merely discover, but creates. For the moment it is far more important to note the divergence, the difference in principle, between the two forms of knowing: scientific and aesthetic.

By means of art man takes over reality through a subjective experience. In science man's knowledge of the world makes its way up an endless staircase and is successively replaced by new knowledge, with one discovery often enough being disproved by the next for the sake of a particular objective truth. An artistic discovery occurs each time as a new and unique image of the world, a hieroglyphic of absolute truth. It appears as a revelation, as a momentary, passionate wish to grasp intuitively and at a stroke *all* the laws of this world—its beauty and ugliness, its compassion and cruelty, its infinity and its limitations. The artist expresses these things by creating the image, *sui generis* detector of the absolute. Through the image is sustained an awareness of the infinite: the eternal within the finite, the spiritual within matter, the limitless given form.

Art could be said to be a symbol of the universe, being linked with that absolute spiritual truth which is hidden from us in our positivistic, pragmatic activities.

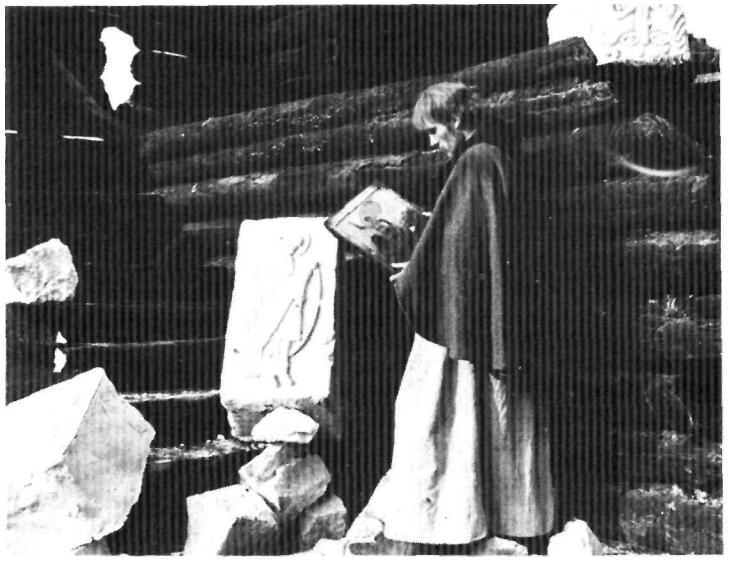
In order to be engaged in any scientific system a person has to avail himself of logical processes of thought, he has to achieve an understanding, which requires as its starting point a particular kind

of education. Art addresses everybody, in the hope of making an impression, above all of being felt, of being the cause of an emotional trauma and being accepted, of winning people not by incontrovertible rational argument but through the spiritual energy with which the artist has charged the work. And the preparatory discipline it demands is not a scientific education but a particular spiritual lesson.

Art is born and takes hold wherever there is a timeless and insatiable longing for the spiritual, for the ideal: that longing which draws people to art. Modern art has taken a wrong turn in abandoning the search for the meaning of existence in order to affirm the value of the individual for its own sake. What purports to be art begins to look like an eccentric occupation for suspect characters who maintain that any personalised action is of intrinsic value simply as a display of self-will. But in artistic creation the personality does not assert itself, it serves another, higher and communal idea. The artist is always a servant, and is perpetually trying to pay for the gift that has been given to him as if by a miracle. Modern man, however, does not want to make any sacrifice, even though true affirmation of self can only be expressed in sacrifice. We arc gradually forgetting about this, and at the same time, inevitably, losing all sense of our human calling. . . .

When I speak of the aspiration towards the beautiful, of the ideal as the ultimate aim of art, which grows from a yearning for that ideal, I am not for a moment suggesting that art should shun the 'dirt' of the world. On the contrary! The artistic image is always a metonym, where one thing is substituted for another, the smaller for the greater. To tell of what is living, the artist uses something dead; to speak of the infinite, he shows the finite. Substitution . . . the infinite cannot be made into matter, but it is possible to create an illusion of the infinite: the image.

Hideousness and beauty are contained within each other. This prodigious paradox, in all its absurdity, leavens life itself, and in art makes that wholeness in which harmony and tension are unified. The image makes palpable a unity in which manifold different elements are contiguous and reach over into each other. One may talk of the idea of the image, describe its essence in words. But such a description will never be adequate. An image can be created and make itself felt. It may be accepted or rejected. But none of this can be understood in any cerebral sense. The idea of infinity cannot be



Andrey Rublyov
The painter-monk, Andrey Rublyov (Anatoliy Solonitsyn) gazes at one of the most celebrated of Russian icons, Chudo o Georgiy Pobedonostse *(MIRACLE OF THE TRIUMPHANT ST GEORGE).*

expressed in words or even described, but it can be apprehended through art, which makes infinity tangible. The absolute is only attainable through faith and in the creative act.

The only condition of fighting for the right to create is faith in your own vocation, readiness to serve, and refusal to compromise. Artistic creation demands of the artist that he 'perish utterly', in the full, tragic sense of those words. And so, if art carries within it a hieroglyphic of absolute truth, this will always be an image of the world, made manifest in the work once and for all time. And if cold, positivistic, scientific cognition of the world is like the ascent of an unending staircase, its artistic counterpoint suggests an endless system of spheres, each one perfect and contained within itself. One may complement or contradict another, but in no circumstances can they cancel each other out; on the contrary, they enrich one another, and accumulate to form an all-embracing sphere that grows out into infinity. These poetic revelations, each one valid and eternal, are evidence of man's capacity to recognise in whose image and likeness he is made, and to voice this recognition.

Moreover, the great function of art is communication, since mutual understanding is a force to unite people, and the spirit of communion is one of the most important aspects of artistic

creativity. Works of art, unlike those of science, have no practical goals in any material sense. Art is a meta-language, with the help of which people try to communicate with one another; to impart information about themselves and assimilate the experience of others. Again, this has to do not with practical advantage but with realising the idea of love, the meaning of which is in sacrifice: the very antithesis of pragmatism. I simply cannot believe that an artist can ever work only for the sake of 'self-expression'. Self-expression is meaningless unless it meets with a response. For the sake of creating a spiritual bond with others it can only be an agonising process, one that involves no practical gain: ultimately, it is an act of sacrifice. But surely it cannot be worth the effort merely for the sake of hearing one's own echo?

Of course intuition plays a part in science as it does in art, and this might seem to be a common element in these contrasting modes of mastering reality. However, despite its great importance in each case, intuition is not at all the same phenomenon in poetic creativity as it is in scientific research.

Equally, the term *understanding* denotes quite different things in these two spheres of activity.

Understanding in a scientific sense means agreement on a cerebral, logical level; it is an intellectual act akin to the process of proving a theorem.

Understanding an artistic image means an aesthetic acceptance of the beautiful, on an emotional or even supra-emotional level.

The scientist's intuition, even if it is like an illumination, an inspiration, will still always be a code standing for a logical deduction. It will mean that not all of the various readings based on the available information have been registered; they are being taken as read, held in the memory, not figuring as already processed data. In other words, knowledge of the law as pertaining in a certain area of science has allowed for some of the intermediate stages to be skipped.

And even though a scientific discovery may seem to be the result of inspiration, the inspiration of the scientist has nothing in common with that of the poet.

For the empirical process of intellectual cognition cannot explain how an artistic image comes into being—unique, indivisible, created and existing on some plane other than that of the intellect. Here it is a question of agreeing on terminology.

In science, at the moment of discovery, logic is replaced by intuition. In art, as in religion, intuition is tantamount to conviction, to faith. It is a state of mind, not a way of thinking. Science is empirical, whereas the conception of images is governed by the dynamic of revelation. It's a question of sudden flashes of illumination — like scales falling from the eyes; not in relation to the parts, however, but to the whole, to the infinite, to what does not fit in to conscious thought.

Art does not think logically, or formulate a logic of behaviour; it expresses its own postulate of faith. If in science it is possible to substantiate the truth of one's case and prove it logically to one's opponents, in art it is impossible to convince anyone that you are right if the created images have left him cold, if they have failed to win him with a newly discovered truth about the world and about man, if in fact, face to face with the work, he was simply bored.

If we take Lev Tolstoy as an example—especially those works where he was particularly resolute in his search for a precise, well-ordered expression of his ideas and moral inspiration—we see how, every time, the artistic image he has created as it were pushes aside its own ideological frontiers, refuses to fit into the framework imposed on it by its author, it argues with them, and sometimes, in a poetic sense, even contradicts its own logical system. And the masterpiece goes on living by its own laws, and has a tremendous aesthetic and emotional impact even when we don't agree with the author's fundamental tenet. It very often happens that a great work is born of the artist's efforts to overcome his weak points; not that these are eliminated, but the work comes into existence despite them.

The artist reveals his world to us, and forces us either to believe in it or to reject it as something irrelevant and unconvincing. In creating an image he subordinates his own thought, which becomes insignificant in the face of that emotionally perceived image of the world that has appeared to him like a revelation. For thought is brief, whereas the image is absolute. In the case of someone who is spiritually receptive, it is therefore possible to talk of an analogy between the impact made by a work of art and that of a purely religious experience. Art acts above all on the soul, shaping its spiritual structure.

A poet has the imagination and psychology of a child, for his impressions of the world are immediate, however profound his ideas about the world may be. Of course one may say of a child, too, that he is a philosopher, but only in some very relative sense. And art flies

in the face of philosophical concepts. The poet does not use 'descriptions' of the world; he himself has a hand in its creation.

Only when a person is willing and able to trust the artist, to believe him, can he be sensitive and susceptible to art. But how hard it sometimes is to cross the threshold of incomprehension which cuts us off from the emotional, poetic image. In just the same way, for a true faith in God, or even in order to feel a need for that faith, a person has to have a certain cast of soul, a particular spiritual potentiality.

In this connection the conversation between Stavrogin and Shatov in Dostoievsky's *The Possessed* springs to mind:

'"I just wanted to know—do you yourself believe in God or don't you?" Nikolai Vsevolodovich looked at him [i.e. Shatov—*A.T.]* sternly.

'"I believe in Russia and Russian Orthodoxy . . . I believe in the body of Christ . . . I believe that the Second Coming will be in Russia. . . I believe . . ." Shatov began to splutter in desperation.

'"And in God? In God?"

'"I . . . I shall believe in God.'"

What is there to add? It is a brilliant insight into the confused state of soul, its decline and inadequacy, that are becoming an ever more chronic syndrome in modern man, who could be diagnosed as being spiritually impotent.

The beautiful is hidden from the eyes of those who arc not searching for the truth, for whom it is contra-indicated. But the profound lack of spirituality of those people who see art and condemn it, the fact that they are neither willing nor ready to consider the meaning and aim of their existence in any higher sense, is often masked by the vulgarly simplistic cry, 'I don't like it!' 'It's boring!' It is not a point that one can argue; but it is like the utterance of a man born blind who is being told about a rainbow. He simply remains deaf to the pain undergone by the artist in order to share with others the truth he has reached.

But what is truth?

I think that one of the saddest aspects of our time is the total destruction in people's awareness of all that goes with a conscious sense of the beautiful. Modern mass culture, aimed at the 'consumer', the civilisation of prosthetics, is crippling people's souls, setting up barriers between man and the crucial questions of his existence, his consciousness of himself as a spiritual being. But the artist cannot be deaf to the call of truth; it alone defines his creative will, organises it, thus enabling him to pass on his faith to others. An artist who has no faith is like a painter who was born blind.

It is a mistake to talk about the artist 'looking for' his subject. In fact the subject grows within him like a fruit, and begins to demand expression. It is like childbirth . . . The poet has nothing to be proud of: he is not master of the situation, but a servant. Creative work is his only possible form of existence, and his every work is like a deed he has no power to annul. For him to be aware that a sequence of such deeds is due and right, that it lies in the very nature of things, he has to have faith in the idea, for only faith interlocks the system of images (for which read: system of life).

And what are moments of illumination if not momentarily felt truth?

The meaning of religious truth is *hope.* Philosophy seeks the truth, defining the meaning of human activity, the limits of human reason, the meaning of existence, even when the philosopher reaches the conclusion that existence is senseless, and human effort—futile.

The allotted function of art is not, as is often assumed, to put across ideas, to propagate thoughts, to serve as example. The aim of art is to prepare a person for death, to plough and harrow his soul, rendering it capable of turning to good.

Touched by a masterpiece, a person begins to hear in himself that same call of truth which prompted the artist to his creative act. When a link is established between the work and its beholder, the latter experiences a sublime, purging trauma. Within that aura which unites masterpieces and audience, the best sides of our souls are made known, and we long for them to be freed. In those moments we recognise and discover ourselves, the unfathomable depths of our own potential, and the furthest reaches of our emotions.

Except in the most general terms of a sense of harmony, how hard it is to speak of a great work. It is as if there were certain immutable parameters to define the masterpiece and single it out from among surrounding phenomena. Furthermore, to a great extent the value of a particular work of art is relative from the point of view of those who appreciate it. A masterpiece is a judgement of reality, complete and finished and with an absolute bearing on that reality; its value lies in giving full expression to a human personality in interaction with the spirit. It is often thought that the signficance of a work of art will be made clear by collating it with people, by bringing about a contact

Andrey Rublyov *Audrey Ruhlyov in the new cathedral.*

Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing. Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things. Charity never faileth: but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there he tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away.

I Cor 13, 1-16

between it and society. In a general way this is true, only the paradox is that at that point the work of art becomes wholly dependent on those who receive it, on who is able to sense, or to play out, those threads which connect the particular work first with the world at large and then with the human personality in his individual relationship with reality. Goethe is a thousand times right when he says that it is as hard to read a good book as it is to write it. And it is no good imagining that one's point of view, one's own assessment, is objective. Only through the diversity of personal interpretations does some sort of relatively objective assessment emerge. And the hierarchical order of merit which works of art take on in the eyes of the crowd, of the majority, mostly comes about as a result of sheer chance: for instance, if a particular work has been fortunate in its interpreters. Or again, for other people one person's aesthetic field of vision may throw light less on the work itself than on the personality of the critic.

Works of criticism tend to approach their subject in order to illustrate a particular idea; far less often, unfortunately, do they start off from the direct, living, emotional impact of the work in question. For an unclouded perception you have to have an outstanding capacity for original, independent, 'innocent' judgement. Generally people look to familiar examples and prototypes for eonfirmation of their opinion, and a work of art is assessed in relation to, or by analogy with, their private aspirations or personal position. On the other hand, of course, in the multiplicity of judgements passed upon it, the work of art in its turn takes on a kind of inconstant and many-faceted life of its own, its existence enhanced and widened.

'The works of the great poets have never yet been read by mankind, for only great poets can read them. They have only been read as the multitude read the stars, at most astrologically, not astronomically. Most men have learned to read to serve a paltry convenience, as they have learned to cipher in order to keep accounts and not be cheated in trade; but of reading as a noble intellectual exercise they know little or nothing; yet this only is reading, in a high sense, not that which lulls us as a luxury and suffers the nobler faculties to sleep the while, but what we have to stand on tiptoe to read and devote our most alert and wakeful hours to.' Thus wrote Thoreau in his wonderful book, *Walden.*

One thing is certain: a masterpiece only comes into being when the artist is totally sincere in his treatment of his material. Diamonds

are not found in black earth; they have to be sought near volcanoes. An artist cannot be partially sincere any more than art can be an approximation of beauty. Art is the absolute form of the beautiful, of the perfected.

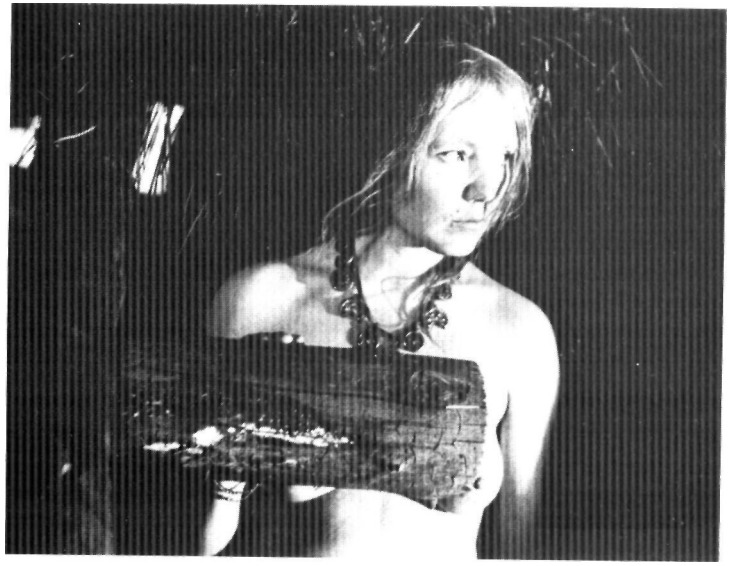
And the beautiful and the finished in art—what is proper to the masterpiece—I see wherever it becomes impossible to single out or prefer any one element, either of content or of form, without detriment to the whole. For in a masterpiece no component can take precedence; you cannot, as it were, 'catch the artist at his own game' and formulate for him his ultimate aims and objectives. 'Art consists of its not being noticeable', wrote Ovid; Engels declared that, 'The better hidden the author's views, the better for the work of art.'

The work of art lives and develops, like any other natural organism, through the conflict of opposing principles. Opposites reach over into each other within it, taking the idea out into infinity. The idea of the work, its determinant, is hidden in the balance of the opposing principles which comprise it—thus 'triumph' over a work of art (in other words a one-sided explanation of its thought and aim) becomes impossible. That was why Goethe remarked that 'the less accessible a work is to the intellect, the greater it is.'

A masterpiece is a space closed in upon itself, not subject to either cooling or over-heating. Beauty is in the balance of the parts. And the paradox is that the more perfect the work, the more clearly does one feel the absence of any associations generated by it. The perfect is unique. Or perhaps it is able to generate an infinite number of associations—which ultimately means the same thing.

Vyacheslav Ivanov[9] made some extraordinarily penetrating and apt comments on this when he wrote of the wholeness of the artistic image (which he calls 'symbol'): 'A symbol is only a true symbol when it is inexhaustible and unlimited in its meaning, when it utters in its arcane (hieratic and magical) language of hint and intimation something that cannot be set forth, that does not correspond to words. It has many faces and many thoughts, and in its remotest depths it remains inscrutable . . . It is formed by organic process, like a crystal . . . Indeed it is a monad, and thus constitutionally different from complex and reducible allegories, parables and similes. . . Symbols cannot be stated or explained, and, confronted by their secret meaning in its totality, we are powerless.'

How arbitrary are the decisions of art critics on the significance or superiority of a work. Without for a moment suggesting—in the



Audrey Rublyov
The young 'witch' on St. *John's Night.*

light of what I have been saying—that my own judgement is objective, I should like to take some examples from the history of painting, specifically of the Italian Renaissance. How many generally accepted evaluations there are, which fill me, at least, with nothing but amazement.

Who has not written about Raphael and his Sistine Madonna? The idea of man, who had attained at last his own personality in flesh and blood, who had discovered the world and God in himself and around him after centuries of worshipping the mediaeval Lord, on whom his gaze had been fixed so steadily as to sap his moral strength—all of this is said to have found its perfect, coherent and ultimate embodiment in that canvas by the genius of Urbino. In a way, perhaps, it has. For the Virgin Mary, in the artist's representation is an ordinary citizen, whose psychological state as reflected in the canvas has its foundation in real life: she is fearful of the fate of her son, given for people in sacrifice. Even though it is in the name of their salvation, he himself is being surrendered in the fight against the temptation to defend him from them.

All of this is indeed vividly written into the picture—from my point of view, too vividly, for the artist's thought is there for the reading: all too unambiguous and well-defined. One is irritated by

the painter's sickly allegorical tendentiousness hanging over the form and overshadowing all the purely painterly qualities of the picture. The artist has concentrated his will on clarity of thought, on the intellectual concept of his work, and paid the price: the painting is flabby and insipid.

I am talking about will and energy, and a law of intensity which seems to me to be a condition of painting. I find this law illustrated in the work of one of Raphael's contemporaries, the Venetian, Carpaccio. In his painting he solves the moral problems which beset people of the Renaissance, dazzled as they were by a reality filled with objects, with people, with matter. He solves them by painterly means, quite different from that quasi-literary treatment which gives the Sistine Madonna its sermonising, fictional tone. The new relationship between the individual and external reality he expresses with courage and nobility—never falling into sentimentalism, knowing how to conceal his bias, his quivering delight in the face of the emancipation.

Gogol wrote to Zhukovsky[10] in January, 1848: '. . . it's not my job to preach a sermon. *Art* is *anyhow a homily.* My job is to speak in *living images,* not in arguments. I must exhibit *life* full-face, not discuss life.'

How true! Otherwise the artist is imposing his thoughts on his

Audrey Rublyov
The sack of Vladimir by the Tartars: rape scene.

audience. And has anyone said that he is cleverer than the people in the auditorium, the reader with a book in his hands, or the theatre-goer in the stalls? It is simply that the poet thinks in images, with which, unlike the audience, he can express his vision of the world. It is obvious that art cannot teach anyone anything, since in four thousand years humanity has learnt nothing at all.

We should long ago have become angels had we been capable of paying attention to the experience of art, and allowing ourselves to be changed in accordance with the ideals it expresses.

It's ridiculous to imagine that people can be *taught* to be good; any more than they can learn how to be faithful wives by following the 'positive' example of Pushkin's Tatiana Larina. Art can only give food—a jolt—the occasion—for psychical experience.

But to return to Renaissance Venice. . . . The crowded compositions of Carpaccio have a startling, uncanny beauty. Perhaps I could even risk calling it: the Beauty of the Idea. As you stand before them you have the disturbing sensation that the inexplicable is about to be explained. For the moment it is impossible to understand what creates the psychological field in which you find yourself, unable to escape the fascination of the painting which transfixes you almost to the point of fear.

Several hours may go by before you begin to sense the principle of the harmony in Carpaccio's painting. And once you have understood it, you remain for ever under the spell of its beauty and of your initial rapture.

When you analyse it, the principle is extraordinarily simple, and expresses in the highest sense the essentially humanistic basis of Renaissance art; far more so, indeed, in my opinion, than Raphael. The point is that *each* of the characters in Carpaccio's crowded composition is a centre. If you concentrate on any one figure you begin to see with unmistakable clarity that everything else is mere context, background, built up like a kind of pedestal for this 'incidental' character. The circle closes, and as you gaze at Carpaccio's canvas your will follows, meekly and unwittingly, the logical channel of feeling intended by the artist, wandering first to one figure apparently lost in the crowd, and then on to the next.

It is not at all my intention to persuade readers of the superiority of my own views on two great artists; nor to instil respect for Carpaccio at the expense of Raphael. All I want to say is that although in the end all art is tendentious, that even style is committed, the same tendency can either be swallowed up in the fathomless layers of artistic images which give it form, or it can be overstated as a poster, as it is in Raphael's Sistine Madonna. Even Marx, poor materialist, said that tendency in art had to be hidden, so that it didn't stick out like springs out of a sofa.

Of course *every* independently expressed idea is precious as one of the myriad pieces of mosaic that come together to form a general pattern of the way that creative man looks at reality. But all the same . . .

If we turn now for clarification of my theory to the work of one of the film makers to whom I feel closest, Luis Bunuel, we find that the driving force of his films is always anti-conformism. His protest—furious, uncompromising and harsh—is expressed above all in the sensuous texture of the film, and is emotionally infectious. The protest is not calculated, not cerebral, not formulated intellectually. Bunuel has too much artistic flair ever to fall for political inspiration, which in my view is always spurious when it is expressed overtly in a work of art. The political and social protest voiced in his films, however, would be enough for several directors of lesser stature.

Bunuel is the bearer, above all else, of poetic consciousness. He knows that aesthetic structure has no need of manifestos, that the power of art docs not lie there but in emotional persuasiveness, in that unique life force of which Gogol wrote in the letter quoted earlier.

Bunuel's work is deeply rooted in the classical culture of Spain. One cannot imagine him without his inspired link with Cervantes and El Greco, Lorca and Picasso, Salvador Dali and Arrabal. Their work, filled with passion, angry and tender, intense and defiant, is born on the one hand of a deep love of country, and on the other of their seething hatred for lifeless structures, for the brutal, impassive milking dry of brains. The field of their vision, narrowed by disdain, takes in only that which is alive with human sympathy, the divine spark, ordinary human suffering—with those things which for centuries have seeped into the hot, stony Spanish earth.

Fidelity to their prophet-like calling has made these Spaniards great. The tense, rebellious force of El Greco's landscapes, the devout asceticism of his figures, the dynamic of his elongated proportions and savagely cold colours, so uncharacteristic of his time and familiar, rather, to admirers of modern art—gave rise to the

Andrey Rublyov
Audrey Rublyov and the Mad

legend that the painter was astigmatic, and that this explained his tendency to deform the proportions of objects and space. But I think that would be too simple an explanation!

Cervantes' Don Quixote became a symbol of nobility, sacrifice, selfless generosity and fidelity, and Sancho Panza of sound common sense. But Cervantes himself was if anything more faithful to his hero than the latter to his Dulcinea. In prison, in a jealous rage because some scoundrel had illicitly brought out a second part of Don Quixote's adventures that was an affront to the pure, sincere affection of the author for his child, he wrote his own second part of the novel, killing off his hero at the end so that nobody else could sully the sacred memory of the Melancholy Knight.

Single-handed, Goya took on the cruel, effete power of the king and made a stand against the Inquisition. His sinister 'Caprichos' became the embodiment of dark forces, flinging him from savage hatred to animal terror, from vicious contempt to quixotic battle against madness and obscurantism.

The historical fate of the genius is amazing and instructive. These sufferers chosen by God, doomed to destroy in the name of movement and reconstruction, find themselves in a paradoxical state of unstable equilibrium between a longing for happiness and the conviction that happiness, as a feasible reality or state, does not exist. For happiness is an abstract, moral concept. Real happiness, happy happiness, consists, as we know, in the aspiration towards that happiness which cannot but be absolute: that absolute after which we thirst. Let us imagine for a moment that people have attained happiness—a state of complete human freedom of will in the widest sense: at that very instant personality is destroyed. Man becomes as solitary as Beelzebub. The connection between social beings is cut like the umbilical cord of a new-born infant. And consequently, society is destroyed. With the force of gravity removed, objects go flying off into space. (Of course some may say that society ought to be destroyed so that something completely new and just can be built on the debris! . . . I don't know, I am not a destroyer . . .)

An acquired and pocketed ideal could hardly be called happiness. As Pushkin said, 'There is no happiness on earth, but peace and will there are.' And you only have to look carefully into masterpieces, penetrating their invigorating—and mysterious—power, for their purport, at once ambivalent and sacred, to become clear. They stand on man's path like ciphers of catastrophe, announcing, 'Danger! No entry!'

They range themselves at the sites of possible or impending historical cataclysms, like warning signs at the edge of precipices or quagmires. They define, hyperbolise and transform the dialectical embryo of danger threatening society, and almost always become the herald of a clash between old and new. A noble but sombre role!

Poets distinguish that danger barrier sooner than their contemporaries, and the earlier they do so the closer they arc to genius. And so, often enough, they remain incomprehensible so long as the celebrated Hegelian conflict is maturing within the womb of history. When the conflict at last takes place, their contemporaries,

shaken and moved, erect a monument to the man who gave expression, when it was still young, vital and full of hope, to this force which brought about the conflict and which has now become the clear and unequivocal symbol of a triumphant move forward.

Then the artist and thinker becomes the ideologue, the apologist for his time, the catalyst of predetermined change. The greatness and ambiguity of art lies in not proving, not explaining and not answering questions even when it throws up warning inscriptions like, 'Caution! Radiation! Danger!' Its influence has to do with moral and ethical upheaval. And those who remain indifferent to its emotional reasoning, and fail to believe it, run the risk of radiation sickness . . . Little by little . . . Unbeknownst to themselves. . . . With a foolish smile on the broad, imperturbable face of the man convinced that the world is as flat as a pancake and rests on three whales.

Masterpieces, not always distinguished or distinguishable among all the works with pretensions to genius, are scattered about the world like warning notices in a mine field. And it's only by good luck that we're not blown up! But that good luck generates a disbelief in the danger and allows the growth of fatuous pseudo-optimism. When that sort of optimistic world view is the order of the day, art naturally becomes an irritant, like the mediaeval charlatan or alchemist. It seems dangerous because it is disturbing. . . .

One remembers how Luis Bunuel, when *Un Chien Andalou* first appeared, had to hide from the infuriated bourgeois and actually take a revolver in his back pocket whenever he left the house. That was the beginning; he had already started to write, as the saying goes, across the paper instead of on the lines. The man in the street who was just getting used to cinema as an entertainment given him by civilisation, shuddered in horror at the soul-searing images and symbols, designed to *épater*, of this film which is indeed very hard to take. But even here Bunuel remained sufficiently an artist to address his audience not in poster-language, but in the emotionally infectious idiom of art. How wonderfully apposite is Tolstoy's remark in his diary on March 21, 1858: 'The political is not compatible with the artistic, because the former, in order to prove, has to be one-sided.' Indeed! The artistic image cannot be one-sided: in order justly to be called truthful, it has to unite within itself dialectically contradictory phenomena.

It is natural, therefore, that not even specialist critics have the

Andrey Rublyov
Audrey Rublyov witnessing pagan rites.

Andrey Rublyov
The witch flees into the river to escape from the Grand Duke's men.

delicacy of touch required to dissect for analysis the idea of a work and its poetic imagery. For an idea does not exist in art except in the images which give it form, and the image exists as a kind of grasping of reality by the will, which the artist undertakes according to his own inclinations and the idiosyncrasies of his worldview.

In my childhood my mother suggested I read *War and Peace* for the first time, and for many years afterwards she would often quote from the novel, pointing out to me the subtlety and detail of Tolstoy's prose. *War and Peace* thus became for me a kind of school, a criterion of taste and artistic depth; after that it was no longer possible to read trash; it would give me an acute feeling of distaste.

Merezhkovsky[11] in his book about Tolstoy and Dostoievsky criticises those passages where Tolstoy's characters engage in philosophy, formulating as it were their final ideas on life . . . However, although I agree entirely that the idea of a poetic work must not be put together purely intellectually, or at any rate agreeing in general terms that this is so, I still have to say that we are talking about the significance of an individual in a literary work, where the sincerity of his self-expression is the only pledge of his worth. And even though I think Merezhkovsky's criticism is based on perfectly sound reasoning, it doesn't stop me from loving *War and Peace* even, if you like, for those passages that are 'a mistake'. For the genius is revealed not in the absolute perfection of a work but in absolute fidelity to himself, in commitment to his own passion. The passionate aspiration of the artist to the truth, to knowing the world and himself in the world, endows with special meaning even the somewhat obscure, or, as they are called, 'less successful' passages in his works.

One might even go further; I don't know a single masterpiece that does not have its weaknesses or is completely free of imperfections. For the individual bias that makes the artist, and his obsession with his own idea, are the source not only of the greatness of a masterpiece but also of its lapses. Again—can lapses be the right name for something that is organically part of an integral world outlook? The genius is not free. As Thomas Mann wrote: 'Only indifference is free. What is distinctive is never free, it is stamped with its own seal, conditioned and chained.'

CHAPTER III

Imprinted time

Stavrogin: . . . in the Apocalypse the angel swears that there'll be no more time.

Kirillov: I know. It's quite true, it's said very clearly and exactly. When the whole of man has achieved happiness, there won't be any time, because it won't be needed. It's perfectly true.

Stavrogin: Where will they put it then?

Kirillov. They won't put it anywhere. Time isn't a thing, it's an idea. It'll die out in the mind.

—F. Dostoievsky, *The Possessed*

Time is a condition for the existence of our T. It is like a kind of culture medium that is destroyed when it is no longer needed, once the links are severed between the individual personality, and the conditions of existence. What is known as the moment of death is also the death of individual time: the life of a human being becomes inaccessible to the feelings of those remaining alive, dead for those around him.

Time is necessary to man, so that, made flesh, he may be able to realise himself as a personality. But I am not thinking of linear time, meaning the possibility of getting something done, performing some action. The action is a result, and what I am considering is the cause which makes man incarnate in a moral sense.

History is still not Time; nor is evolution. They are both consequences. Time is a state: the flame in which there lives the salamander of the human soul.

Time and memory merge into each other; they are like the two sides of a medal. It is obvious enough that without Time, memory cannot exist either. But memory is something so complex that no list of all its attributes could define the totality of the impressions through which it affects us. Memory is a spiritual concept! For instance, if somebody tells us of his impressions of childhood, we can say with certainty that we shall have enough material in our hands to form a complete picture of that person. Bereft of memory, a person becomes the prisoner of an illusory existence; falling out of

time he is unable to seize his own link with the outside world—in other words he is doomed to madness

As a moral being, man is endowed with memory which sows in him a sense of dissatisfaction. It makes us vulnerable, subject to pain.

When scholars and critics study time as it appears in literature, music or painting, they speak of the *methods* of recording it. Studying Joyce or Proust, for instance, they will examine the aesthetic mechanics of existence in the retrospect of the works, the way the individual who does the recollecting actually records his experience. They will study the forms used in art to fix time, whereas I am interested here in the inner, moral qualities essentially inherent in time itself.

The time in which a person lives gives him the opportunity of knowing himself as a moral being, engaged in the search for the truth; yet this gift is at once delectable and bitter. And life is no more than the period allotted to him, and in which he may, indeed must, fashion his spirit in accordance with his own understanding of the aim of human existence. The rigid frame into which it is thrust, however, makes our responsibility to ourselves and others all the more starkly obvious. The human conscience is dependent upon time for its existence.

• Time is said to be irreversible. And this is true enough in the sense that 'you can't bring back the past', as they say. But what exactly is this 'past? Is it what has passed? And what does 'passed' mean for a person when for each of us the past is the bearer of all that is constant in the reality of the present, of each current moment? In a certain sense the past is far more real, or at any rate more stable, more resilient than the present. The present slips and vanishes like sand between the fingers, acquiring material weight only in its recollection. King Solomon's ring bore the inscription, 'All will pass'; by contrast, I want to draw attention to how time in its moral implication is in fact turned back. Time can vanish without trace in our material world for it is a subjective, spiritual category. The time we have lived settles in our soul as an experience placed within time.

Cause and effect are mutually dependent, forwards and retrospectively. One begets the other by an inexorably ordained necessity, which would be fatal for us if we were able to discover all of the connections at once. The link of cause and effect, in other words the transition from one state to another, is also the form in which time exists, the means whereby it is materialised, in day to day practice. But, having made its effect, the cause is not then discarded like the used stage of a rocket. Given any effect, we constantly go back to its source, its causes—in other words, we could be said to be turning time back through conscience. Cause and effect arc, in a moral sense, linked retroactively; and then a person does, as it were, return to his past.

In his account of Japan the journalist Ovchinnikov wrote: 'It is considered that time, *per se,* helps to make known the essence of things. The Japanese therefore sec a particular charm in the evidence of old age. They are attracted to the darkened tone of an old tree, the ruggedness of a stone, or even the scruffy look of a picture whose edges have been handled by a great many people. To all these signs of age they give the name, *saba,* which literally means "rust". *Saba,* then, is a natural rustiness, the charm of olden days, the stamp of time. [—or patina—A.T.]

'Saba, as an element of beauty, embodies the link between art and nature.'

In a sense the Japanese could be said to be trying to master time aesthetically.

Here one is inevitably reminded of what Proust said of his grandmother: 'Even when she had to make someone an ostensibly practical gift, when she had to give an armchair, a dinner service or a walking-stick, she would look out for 'old' ones, as if these, purged by long disuse of their utilitarian character, were able to tell us how people had lived in the old days, rather than serve our modern needs.'

Proust also spoke of raising 'a vast edifice of memories', and that seems to me to be what cinema is called to do. It could be said to be the ideal manifestation of the Japanese concept of *saba;* for, as it masters this completely new material—time—it becomes, in the fullest sense, a new muse.

A mass of preconceptions exists in and around the profession. And I do mean preconceptions, not traditions: those hackneyed ways of thinking, cliches, that grow up around traditions and gradually take them over. And you can achieve nothing in art unless you are free from received ideas. You have to work out your own position, your individual point of view—subject always, of course, to common

sense—and keep this before you, like the apple of your eye, all the time you are working.

Directing starts not when the script is being discussed with the writer, nor during work with the actor, or with the composer, but at the time when, before the interior gaze of the person making the film and known as the director, there emerges an image of the film: this might be a series of episodes worked out in detail, or perhaps the consciousness of an aesthetic texture and emotional atmosphere, to be materialised on the screen. The director must have a clear idea of his objectives and work through with his camera team to achieve their total, precise realisation. However, all this is no more than technical expertise. Although it involves many of the conditions necessary to art, in itself it is not sufficient to earn for the director the name of artist.

He starts to be an artist at the moment when, in his mind or even on film, his own distinctive system of images starts to take shape—his own pattern of thoughts about the external world—and the audience are invited to judge it, to share with the director in his most precious and secret dreams. Only when his personal viewpoint is brought in, when he becomes a kind of philosopher, does he emerge as an artist, and cinema—as an art. (Of course he is a philosopher only in a relative sense. As Paul Valéry observed, 'Poets are philosophers. You might equally well compare the painter of sea-scapes to a ship's captain.')

Every art form, however, is born and lives according to its particular laws. When people talk about the specific norms of cinema, it is usually in juxtaposition with literature. In my view it is all-important that the interaction between cinema and literature should be explored and exposed as completely as possible, so that the two can at last be separated, never to be confused again. In what ways are literature and cinema similar and related? What links them?

Above all the unique freedom enjoyed by practitioners in both fields to take what they want of what is offered by the real world, and to arrange it in sequence within time. This definition may appear too wide and general, but it seems to me to take in all that cinema and literature have in common. Beyond it lie irreconcilable differences, stemming from the essential disparity between word and screened image; for the basic difference is that literature uses words to describe the world, whereas film does not have to use words: it manifests itself to us directly.

Andrey Rublyov
The painter-monk on his journey.

In all these years no single binding definition has been found for the specific character of cinema. A great many views exist, either in conflict with each other, or worse—overlapping in a kind of eclectic confusion. Every artist in the film world will see, pose and solve the problem in his own way. In any case there has to be a clear specification if one is to work in the full consciousness of what one is doing, for it is not possible to work without recognising the laws of one's own art form.

What are the determining factors of cinema, and what emerges from them? What are its potential, means, images—not only formally, but even spiritually?

I still cannot forget that work of genius, shown in the last century, the film with which it all started—*L'Arrivee d'un Train en Gare de La Ciotat.* That film made by Auguste Lumiere[12] was simply the result of the invention of the camera, the film and the projector. The spectacle, which only lasts half a minute, shows a section of railway platform, bathed in sunlight, ladies and gentlemen walking about, and the train coming from the depths of the frame and heading straight for the camera. As the train approached panic started in the theatre: people jumped up and ran away. That was the moment when cinema was born; it was not simply a question of technique, or just a new way of reproducing the world. What came into being was a new aesthetic principle.

For the first time in the history of the arts, in the history of culture, man found the means *to take an impression of time.* And simultaneously the possibility of reproducing that time on screen as often as he wanted, to repeat it and go back to it. He acquired a matrix for *actual time.* Once seen and recorded, time could now be preserved in metal boxes over a long period (theoretically for ever).

That is the sense in which the Lumiere films were the first to contain the seed of a new aesthetic principle. But immediately afterwards cinema turned aside from art, forced down the path that was safest from the point of view of philistine interest and profit. In the course of the following two decades almost the whole of world literature was screened, together with a huge number of theatrical and historical plots. Cinema was exploited for the straightforward and seductive purpose of recording theatrical performance. Film took a wrong turn; and we have to accept the fact that the unfortunate results of that move are still with us. The worst of it was not, in my view, the reduction of cinema to mere illustration: far worse was the failure to exploit artistically the one precious potential of the cinema—the possibility of printing on celluloid the actuality of time.

In what form docs cinema print time? Let us define it as *factual.* And fact can consist of an event, or a person moving, or any material object; and furthermore the object can be presented as motionless and unchanging, in so far as that immobility exists within the actual course of time.

That is where the roots are to be sought of the specific character of cinema. Of course, in music too the problem of time is central. Here, however, its solution is quite different: the life force of music is materialised on the brink of its own total disappearance. But the virtue of cinema is that it appropriates time, complete with that material reality to which it is indissolubly bound, and which surrounds us day by day and hour by hour.

Time, captured in its factual forms and manifestations: such is the supreme idea of cinema as an art, leading us to think about the wealth of untapped resources in film, about its colossal future. On that idea I build my working hypotheses, both practical and theoretical.

Why do people go to the cinema? What takes them into a darkened room where, for two hours, they watch the play of shadows on a sheet? The search for entertainment? The need for a kind of drug? All over the world there are, indeed, entertainment firms and organisations which exploit cinema and television and spectacles of many other kinds. Our starting-point, however, should not be there, but in the essential principles of cinema, which have to do with the human need to master and know the world. I think that what a person normally goes to the cinema for is *time:* for time lost or spent or not yet had. He goes there for living experience; for cinema, like no other art, widens, enhances and concentrates a person's experience—and not only enhances it but makes it longer, significantly longer. That is the power of cinema: 'stars', story-lines and entertainment have nothing to do with it.

What is the essence of the director's work? We could define it as sculpting in time. Just as a sculptor takes a lump of marble, and, inwardly conscious of the features of his finished piece, removes everything that is not part of it—so the film-maker, from a 'lump of time' made up of an enormous, solid cluster of living facts, cuts off and discards whatever he does not need, leaving only what is to be an

Audrey Rublyov
The *torture of Patrikey, Cathedral Treasurer (played by the famous clown, Yuri Nikulin). 'Accursed he the heathens, may they burn in everlasting fire*[1]*.'*

element of the finished film, what will prove to be integral to the cinematic image.

Cinema is said to be a composite art, based on the involvement of a number of neighbour art forms: drama, prose, acting, painting, music. . . . In fact the 'involvement' of these art forms can, as it turns out, impinge so heavily on cinema as to reduce it to a kind of mishmash, or—at best—to a mere semblance of harmony in which the heart of cinema is not to be found, because it is precisely in those conditions that it ceases to exist. It has to be made clear once and for all that if cinema is an art it cannot simply be an amalgam of the principles of other, contiguous art forms: only having done that can we turn to the question of the allegedly composite nature of film. A meld of literary thought and painterly form will not be a cinematic image: it can only produce a more or less empty or pretentious hybrid.

Nor must the laws of movement and the organisation of time in a film be replaced by the time laws of theatre.

Time in the form of fact: again I come back to it. I see chronicle as

the ultimate cinema; for me it is not a way of filming but a way of reconstructing, of recreating life.

I once taped a casual dialogue. People were talking without knowing they were being recorded. Then I listened to the tape and thought how brilliantly it was 'written' and 'acted'. The logic of the characters' movements, the feeling, the energy—how tangible it all was. How euphonic the voices were, how beautiful the pauses! . . . No Stanislavsky could have found justification for those pauses, and Hemingway's stylistics seem pretentious and naive in comparison with the way thai casually recorded dialogue was constructed . . .

This is how I conceive an ideal piece of filming: the author takes millions of metres of film, on which systematically, second by second, day by day and year by year, a man's life, for instance, from birth to death, is followed and recorded, and out of all that come two and a half thousand metres, or an hour and a half of screen time. (It is curious also to imagine those millions of metres going through the hands of several directors for each to make his film—how different they would all be!)

And even though it would not be possible to have those millions of metres, the 'ideal' conditions of work are not as unreal as all that, and they should be what we aspire to. In what sense? The point is to pick out and join together the bits of sequential fact, knowing, seeing and hearing precisely what lies between them and what kind of chain holds them together. That is cinema. Otherwise we can easily slip onto the accustomed path of theatrical playwriting, building a plot structure based on given characters. The cinema has to be free to pick out and join up facts taken from a 'lump of time' of any width or length. Nor do I think that it's necessary to follow one particular person. On the screen the logic of a person's behaviour can transfer into the rationale of quite different—apparently irrelevant—facts and phenomena, and the person you started with can vanish from the screen, replaced by something quite different, if that is what is required by the author's guiding principle. For instance it is possible to make a film in which there is no one hero character figuring throughout the film, but where everything is defined by the particular foreshortening effect of one person's view of life.

Cinema is capable of operating with any fact diffused in time; it can take absolutely anything from life. What for literature would be an occasional possibility, an isolated case (for instance the interpolation of 'documentary material' in Hemingway's book of

short stories, *In Our Time)* is for cinema the working of its fundamental artistic laws. Absolutely anything! Applied to the fabric of a play or a novel that 'absolutely anything' might well be inappropriate; in film it is germane.

Juxtaposing a person with an environment that is boundless, collating him with a countless number of people passing by close to him and far away, relating a person to the whole world: that is the meaning of cinema.

There is a term which has already become commonplace: 'poetic cinema'. What is meant by it is cinema that boldly moves away, in its images, from what is factual and concrete, as pictured by real life, and at the same time affirms its own structural wholeness. But there is a hidden danger for cinema in moving away from itself. 'Poetic cinema' as a rule gives birth to symbols, allegories and other such figures—that is, to things that have nothing to do with the imagery natural to cinema.

Here I feel one more point needs clarification. If time appears in cinema in the form of fact, the fact is given in the form of simple, direct observation. The basic element of cinema, running through it to its tiniest cells, is observation.

We all know the traditional genre of ancient Japanese poetry, the haikku. Eisenstein quoted some examples:

Coldly shining moon;
Near the ancient monastery
A wolf is howling.

Silent in the field
A butterfly was flying
Then it fell asleep.

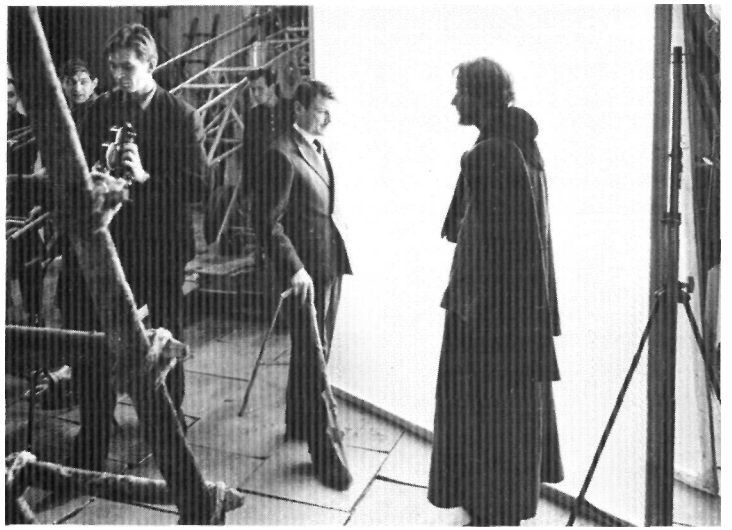
Eisenstein saw in these three line verses the model for how the combination of three separate elements creates something different in kind from any of them. Since this principle was already there in haikku, however, it is clearly not exclusive to cinema.

What attracts me in haikku is its observation of life—pure, subtle, one with its subject; a kind of distillation.

As *it passes by*
The full moon barely touches
Fishhooks in the waves.

The dew has fallen,
On all the spikes of blackthorn
There hang little drops.

This is pure observation. Its aptness and precision will make anyone, however crude his receptivity, feel the power of poetry and recognise—forgive the banality—the living image which the author has caught.

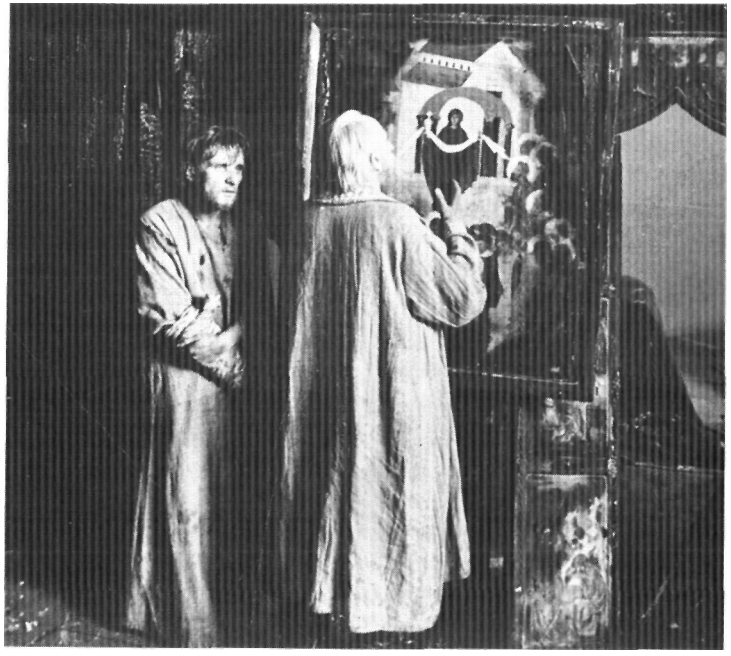


Andrey Rublyov
Audrey Tarkovsky on the set with his principal adorn.

And although I am very chary of making comparisons with other art forms, this particular example from poetry seems to me close to the truth of cinema, with the difference that prose and poetry use words by definition, while a film is born of direct observation of life; that, in my view, is the key to poetry in cinema. For the cinema image is essentially the observation of a phenomenon passing through time. .

There is one film that could not be further removed from the principle of direct observation, and that is Eisenstein's *Ivan the Terrible.* Not only is the whole film a kind of hieroglyphic, it consists of a series of hieroglyphics—major, minor and minute. There is not a single detail that is not permeated with the author's intent. (I have heard that Eisenstein himself once spoke ironically in a lecture of these hieroglyphics and arcane meanings: Ivan's armour has a picture of the sun and Kurbsky's of the moon, since the essence of Kurbsky is that he 'shines with reflected light'.) The characterisation, the harmonious composition of the images, the atmosphere, take *Ivan the Terrible* so close to the theatre (the musical theatre), that it almost ceases—in my own purely theoretical view—to be a cinematic work. ('Day-time opera', as Eisenstein once said of a colleague's film.) The films made by Eisenstein in the 'twenties, above all *Potyomkin,* were very different; they were at

Andrcy Rublyov
Boriska, the bell-caster (played by Kolya Burlyaev, who also had the title role in Ivan's Childhood), *kneels before his patrons.*



Andrey Rublyov
Andrey Rublyov talks with his teacher, Theophanes the Greek, about the essence of artistic creation and of faith.

least naturalistic visually.

The cinema image, then, is basically observation of life's facts within time, organised according to the pattern of life itself, and observing its time laws. Observations are selective: we leave on film only what is justified as integral to the image. Not that the cinematic image can be divided and segmented against its time-nature, current time cannot be removed from it. The image becomes authentically cinematic when (amongst other things) not only does it live within time, but time also lives within it, even within each separate frame.

No 'dead' object—table, chair, glass—taken in a frame in isolation from everything else, can be presented as it were outside passing time, as if from the point of view of an absence of time.

You only have to by-pass this condition to make it possible to take over any number of properties from one of the neighbour arts. And with their help you can indeed make very effective films; only from the point of view of cinematic form these will be incompatible with the true development of the nature, essence and potential of cinema.

No other art can compare with cinema in the force, precision and starkness with which it conveys awareness of facts and aesthetic structures existing and changing within time. I therefore find particularly irritating the pretensions of modern 'poetic cinema', which involves breaking off contact with fact and with time realism, and makes for preciousness and affectation.

Contemporary cinema contains several basic lines of formal development, but it is no accident that the one that stands out and commands attention is the tendency towards chronicle; this is so important and so rich in potential that attempts are often made to imitate it, almost to the point of pastiche. But a faithful record, a true chronicle, cannot be made by shooting by hand, with a wobbling camera, even making blurred shots—as if the camera-man hadn't quite managed to focus—or by any other gimmicks of that kind. It's not *how* you shoot that is going to convey the specific, unique form of the developing fact. Often enough shots which purport to be casual are quite as contrived and pretentious as the meticulously made frames of pseudo-poetic cinema with their empty symbolism. In either case the concrete, living, emotional content of the object

filmed is cut off.

We should also analyse what are known as artistic conventions, for not all of these are valid: some are irrelevant, and could more properly be called preconceptions.

On the one hand are conventions which have to do with the very nature of a given art form: for instance the perpetual concern of the painter with colour and with the relationships of colour on the surface of the canvas.

On the other are the illusory conventions that have grown up out of something passing—perhaps from an imperfect understanding of the essence of cinema; or an incidental stricture on means of expression; or simply from habit and acceptance of stereotype; or from a theoretical approach to art. Look at the facile convention that equates the frames of a shot and of a canvas: that is how preconceptions grow up.

One of the binding and immutable conditions of cinema is that actions on the screen have to develop sequentially, regardless of the fact of being conceived as simultaneous or retrospective or what have you. In order to present two or more processes as simultaneous or parallel you have necessarily to show them one after the other, they have to be in sequential montage. There is no other way. In Dovzhenko's *Earth* the hero is shot dead by the *kulak,* and in order to convey the gunshot, the camera cuts away from the scene where the hero collapses; somewhere in the fields startled horses lift up their heads, and then the camera cuts back to the scene of the murder. To the audience the raised heads of the horses spoke of the shot ringing out. When sound came in there was no longer any need for that kind of montage. And it's no good harking back to the brilliant shots of Dovzhcnko in order to justify the alacrity with which gratuitous use is made of intercutting in modern cinema. You have someone falling into the water, and then in the next shot, as it were, 'Masha looks on.' There is usually no need for this at all, such shots seem to be a hangover from the poetics of the silent movie. A convention dictated by necessity has turned into a preconception, a cliche.

In recent years developments in film technique have given birth to (or degenerated into) a particular aberration: the wide screen is divided into two or more parts, in which two or more actions can be shown happening in parallel at the same time. In my view this innovation is ill-conceived; pseudo-conventions are being fabricated that are not organically part of the cinema, and are therefore sterile.

Try to imagine a filmic spectacle shown simultaneously on several—even on six—screens. The movement of the film frame has its own nature, which is not that of the musical note; 'polyscreen' cinema should be compared not with a chord, or harmony, or polyphony, but rather with the sound produced by several orchestras playing different pieces of music at the same time.

The only result would be chaos, the laws of perception would be broken, and the author of the polyscreen film would inevitably be faced with the task of somehow reducing simultaneity to sequence, in other words of thinking up for each instance an elaborate system of conventions. And it would be rather like putting one's right arm all the way round one's left ear in order to touch the right nostril with the right hand. Is it not better to accept, once and for all, the simple and binding condition of cinema as a succession of visuals, and to work from that starting-point? A person is quite simply not capable of watching several actions at once; it is beyond his psychophysiology.

A distinction has to be made between those natural conditions which are immanent in the nature of a given art form—which define the difference between real life and the specific limitations of that art form—and illusory, artificial conditions which have to do not with basic principles but with slavish acceptance of received ideas, irresponsible fantasising or the adoption of the tenets of related art forms.

One of the most important limitations of cinema, if you like, is the fact that the image can only be realised in factual, natural forms of visible and audible life. A picture has to be naturalistic. I do not use the term here in its accepted literary connotation—as associated, for instance, with Zola; what I mean is that we perceive the form of the filmic image through the senses.

What then, you may ask, of the author's fantasies, what of the interior world of the individual imagination, how is it possible to reproduce what a person sees within himself, all his dreams, both sleeping and waking? . . . It is possible, provided that dreams on the screen are made up of exactly these same observed, natural forms of life. Sometimes directors shoot at high speed, or through a misty veil, or use some other trick as old as the hills, or bring in musical effects—and the well-trained audience react instantly: 'Ah, he's remembering!' 'She's dreaming!' But that mysterious blurring is not the way to achieve a true filmic impression of dreams or memories.

The cinema is not, and must not be, concerned with borrowing effects from the theatre. What then is needed? First of all we need to know what sort of dream our hero had. We need to know the actual, material facts of the dream: to see all the elements of reality which were refracted in that layer of the consciousness which kept vigil through the night (or with which a person functions when he sees some picture in his imagination). And we need to convey all of that on the screen precisely, not misting it over and not using elaborate devices. Again, if I were asked, what about the vagueness, the opacity, the improbability of a dream? — I would say that in cinema 'opacity' and 'ineffability' do not mean an indistinct picture, but the particular impression created by the logic of the dream: unusual and unexpected combinations of, and conflicts between, entirely real elements. These must be shown with the utmost precision. By its very nature cinema must expose reality, not cloud it. (Incidentally, the most interesting or frightening dreams are the ones where you remember everything down to the minutest detail.)

I want to make the point yet again that in film, every time, the first essential in any plastic composition, its necessary and final criterion, is whether it is true to life, specific and factual; that is what makes it unique. By contrast, symbols are born, and readily pass into general use to become cliches, when an author hits upon a particular plastic composition, ties it in with some mysterious turn of thought of his own, loads it with extraneous meaning.

The purity of cinema, its inherent strength, is revealed not in the symbolic aptness of images (however bold these may be) but in the capacity of those images to express a specific, unique, actual fact.

In Bunuel's *Nazarin* there is an episode set in a plague-stricken village, parched, rocky, built of limestone. What does the director do to create an impression of a place bereft of heirs? We see the dusty road, shot in deep focus, and two rows of houses, going into the distance, shot centrally. The street goes uphill, so the sky is not visible. The right side of the street is in shadow, and the left in sunshine. The street is completely empty. Along the middle of the road, from the depths of the frame, a child is walking straight towards the camera, dragging behind him a white—brilliantly white—sheet. The camera slowly pans. And at the very last moment, just before cutting to the next shot, the field of the frame is suddenly covered over, again with a white cloth, which gleams in the sunlight. One wonders where it can have come from. Could it be a sheet drying on a line? And then, with astonishing intensity, you feel 'the breath of the plague', captured in this extraordinary manner, like a medical fact.

And a shot from Kurosawa's *The Seven Samurai.* A mediaeval Japanese village. A fight is going on between some horsemen, and the samurai who are on foot. It is pouring with rain, there is mud everywhere. The samurai wear an ancient Japanese garment which leaves most of the leg bare, and their legs are plastered with mud. And when one samurai falls down dead we see the rain washing away the mud and his leg becoming white, as white as marble. A man is dead; that is an image which is a fact. It is innocent of symbolism, and that is an image.

But perhaps it happened by chance—the actor was running, then he fell down, the rain washed the mud away, and here we are taking it as a revelation on the part of the film-maker?

A further word about *raise en scene.* Film *mise en scene,* as we know, means the disposition and movement of selected objects in relation to the area of the frame. What purpose does it serve? Nine times out often you'll be told that it serves to express the meaning of what is happening; and that is all. But to set that as the limit of *mise en scene* is to start along a path that leads only one way: towards abstraction. In the final scene of *Give Anna Giacceia a Husband* de Santis puts his hero and heroine on either side of a metal gate (somebody else may have thought of it before, but that doesn't matter). The gate positively shouts: now the couple are split up, they'll never be happy, it's all over. And so a specific, individual, unique event is turned into something utterly banal because it has been forced to take on a trivial form. The spectator immediately knocks his head against the 'ceiling' of the director's so-called thought. The trouble is that lots of audiences enjoy such knocks, they make them feel safe: not only is it 'exciting' but the idea is clear and there's no need to strain the brain or the eye, there's no need to see anything specific in what is happening. And on that sort of diet the audience starts to degenerate. Yet similar gates, fences, hedges have been repeated many a time in many a film and always mean the same thing.

What then is *mise en scene?* Let us turn to the best works of literature. I come back to something I've written about before, the final episode of Dostoievsky's *The Idiot,* when Prince Myshkin comes into the room with Rogozhin, and through the doorway the

murdered Nastasya Fillipovna is lying and, as Rogozhin says, already stinking. The two sit facing each other on chairs in the middle of the enormous room, so close that their knees are touching. When you picture this it's frightening. Here the *mise en scene* arises out of the psychological state of particular characters at a particular moment, as a unique statement of the complexity of their relationship. The director, to build up a *mise en scene,* must work from the psychological state of the characters, through the inner dynamic of the mood of the situation, and bring it all back to the truth of the one, directly observed fact, and its unique texture. Only then will the *mise en scene* achieve the specific, many-faceted significance of actual truth.

It is sometimes suggested that the actors' position makes no difference: have them standing here by the wall, and talking; take him in close-up and then her; and then they part. But of course the most important thing has not been thought out; and it is not just a question of the director, but also, very often, of the screen writer.

If one ignores the fact that a screenplay is intended for a film (and in that sense is a 'half-finished product'—not more, but not less either) it will not be possible to make a good film. It may be possible to make something else, something new, and even to make it well, but the script-writer will be dissatisfied with the director. Accusations to the effect that the director has 'spoiled a good idea' are not always justified. The idea is often so literary—and interesting only for that reason—that the director is obliged to transform and break it in order to make the film. At best the strictly literary side of a script (apart from the dialogue) can be useful to the director as a pointer to the emotional content of an episode, a scene, or even of an entire film. (For example, in one script that I was offered it said that the room smelt of dust, dead flowers and dried ink. I like that very much because I can begin to picture how that interior looks, feel its 'soul', and if the artist were to bring his sketches I should immediately be able to tell which ones are right and which are not. All the same, such stage directions are not enough to form the basis of the key images of the film; as a rule they simply help to find the atmosphere.) Anyhow, for me a real screenplay is one that is not intended of itself to affect the reader in any complete and final way, but is designed entirely to be transformed into a film and only thus to acquire its finished form.

Screen-writers, however, fulfil an important function, and one

which demands true literary talent in terms of psychological insight. This is where literature does bring an influence to bear on cinema which is both useful and necessary, and which does not strangle or distort it. Nothing in cinema at the present time is more neglected or superficial than psychology. I'm talking about understanding and revealing the underlying truth of characters' states of mind; this is largely ignored. And yet it is this that stops a man dead in his tracks in the most uncomfortable position, or makes him jump out of a fifth-floor window.

For every single case cinema demands of both director and script-writer enormous knowledge; the author of a film has thus to have something in common with the psychologist-screen-writer, and also with the psychiatrist. For the plastic composition of a film depends largely, often critically, on the particular state of a character in particular circumstances. And the script-writer can, indeed must, bring to bear on the director his own knowledge of the whole truth about that inner state, even to the point of telling him how to build up the *mise en scene.* One can simply write: 'The characters stop by the wall', and go on to give the dialogue. But what is special about the words that are being uttered, and do they correspond with standing by the wall? The meaning of the scene cannot be concentrated within the words spoken by the characters. 'Words, words, words'—in real life these are mostly so much water, and only rarely and for a brief while can you observe perfect accord between word and gesture, word and deed, word and meaning. For usually a person's words, inner state and physical action develop on different planes. They may complement, or sometimes, up to a point, echo one another; more often they are in contradiction; occasionally, in sharp conflict, they unmask one another, And only by knowing exactly what is going on and why, simultaneously, on each of these planes, can we achieve that unique, truthful force of fact of which I have spoken. As for *mise en scene,* when it corresponds precisely with the spoken word, when there is interaction, a meeting-point between them, then the image is born: the observation-image, absolute and specific. That is why the scenarist has to be a true writer.

When the director is handed the script and starts to work on it, it always happens that however profound its conception and however precise its objective, the script invariably undergoes some sort of change. It never materialises on the screen literally, word for word,

mirrored; there are always distortions. Collaboration between screen-writer and director therefore tends to be beset by difficulty and argument. A valid film can be realised even when the original conception has been broken and destroyed during their work together, and a new idea, a new organism, has emerged from the ruins.

Generally speaking it is becoming harder to separate the functions of director and screen-writer. As is only natural, in cinema today directors are leaning more and more towards the authorship, while script-writers are expected to have an ever more thorough grasp of directing. Perhaps therefore we should consider it the norm for the conception to develop integrally rather than be broken or distorted, in other words for the film-maker to write the script himself, or, conversely, for the screen-writer also to be responsible for the directing.

It is worth stressing the point that the author's work springs from his thought, his intention, from the need to make a statement about something important. This is obvious; it can't be any other way. Of course it can happen that the author, starting out to solve purely formal problems (and there arc plenty of instances of this in the other arts), may be faced with a major obstacle and then find himself seeing things from a new angle; but all the same this only happens when an idea comes to him unexpectedly—in a particular form, imposing itself on his theme, on the thought which—consciously or not—he has been carrying with him in his life for a long time.

Clearly the hardest thing for the working artist is to create his own conception and follow it, unafraid of the strictures it imposes, however rigid these may be. It is far easier to be eclectic, to follow the routine patterns which abound in our professional arsenal: less trouble for the director and simpler for the audienee. But there is a danger here of becoming hopelessly entangled.

I see it as the clearest evidence of genius when an artist follows his conception, his idea, his principle, so unswervingly that he has this truth of his constantly in his control, never letting go of it even for the sake of his own enjoyment of his work.

There are few people of genius in the cinema; look at Bresson, Mizoguchi, Sokurov, Vigo, Bunuel: not one of them could be confused with anyone else. An artist of that calibre follows one straight line, albeit at great cost; not without weaknesses or even,

indeed, occasionally being far-fetched; but always in the name of the one idea, the one conception.

In world cinema there have been many attempts to create a new concept in film, always with the general aim of bringing it closer to life, to factual truth. Hence pictures like Cassavetes' *Shadows,* Shirley Clarke's *The Connection,* Jean Rouch's *Chronicle of a Summer.* These notable films are marked, apart from anything else, by a lack of commitment; complete and unconditional factual truth is not consistently pursued.

The artist has a duty to be calm. He has no right to show his emotion, his involvement, to go pouring it all out at the audience. Any excitement over a subject must be sublimated into an Olympian calm of form. That is the only way in which an artist can tell of the things that excite him.

I am reminded of how we worked on *Andrey Rublyov.*

The film is set in the fifteenth century, and it turned out to be excruciatingly difficult to picture 'how everything was'. We had to use any sources we could: architecture, the written word, iconography.

Had we gone for reconstruction of the picturesque tradition of the picturesque world of those times, the result would have been a stylised, conventional ancient Russian world, of the kind that at best is reminiscent of miniatures or icons of the period. But for cinema that is not the right way. I have never understood, for instance, attempts to construct *mise en scene* from a painting. All you will be doing is bringing the painting back to life, and duly being rewarded with superficial acclaim: 'Ah, what a feeling for the period!' 'Ah, what cultivated people!' But you will also be killing cinema.

Therefore one of the aims of our work was to reconstruct for a modern audience the real world of the fifteenth century, that is, to present that world in such a way that costume, speech, life-style and architecture would not give the audience any feeling of relic, of antiquarian rarity. In order to achieve the truth of direct observation, what one might almost term physiological truth, we had to move away from the truth of archaeology and ethnography. Inevitably there was an element of artificiality, but this was the antithesis of that of the revived painting. Had someone from the fifteenth century suddenly appeared to witness it, he would have found the filmed material a strange enough spectacle; but no more so than us and our

own world. Because we live in the twentieth century, we have no possibility of making a film directly from material six hundred years old. I remain convinced, nonetheless, that it is possible to attain our objectives, even in such difficult conditions, provided we go the whole way, unswervingly, along the path we have chosen, despite the Herculean labour involved. How much simpler it would be to go into a Moscow street and start filming with a concealed camera.

We cannot reconstruct the fifteenth century exactly, however thoroughly we study all the things that remain from it. Our awareness of that time is totally different from that of the people who lived then. But nor do we think of Rublyov's 'Trinity' in the same way as his contemporaries, and yet the 'Trinity' has gone on living through the centuries: it was alive then, and is so now, and it is a link between the people of that century and this. The 'Trinity' can be taken simply as an icon. It can be taken as a magnificent museum piece, perhaps as a model of the style of painting of that particular epoch. But this icon, this memorial, can be seen in another way: we can turn to the human, spiritual meaning of the 'Trinity' which is alive and understandable for us who live in the second half of the twentieth century. And this is how we approached the reality which gave birth to the 'Trinity'.

Given such an approach we had deliberately to introduce elements that would dispel any impression of archaism, of museum reconstruction.

The script includes an episode in which a peasant, who has made himself a pair of wings, climbs up on to the cathedral, jumps, and crashes to the ground. We 'reconstructed' this episode, checking its essential psychological element. Evidently it was a case of a man who all his life had been thinking of himself flying. But how would it really have happened? People were running after him, he was hurrying. Then he jumped. What would this man have seen and felt as he flew for the first time? He didn't have time to see anything, he fell and was shattered. The most he could have known was the unexpected, terrifying fact of falling. The inspiration of the flight, its symbolism, were eliminated, for the meaning was straightforward and basic, and related to associations which are perfectly familiar to us. The screen had to show an ordinary, dirty peasant, then his fall, his crash, his death. This is a concrete happening, a human catastrophe, observed by onlookers just as if now, as we watched, someone were to dash out for some reason in front of a car and finish

up lying there crushed on the asphalt.

We spent a long time working out how to destroy the plastic symbol on which the episode was built, and reached the conclusion that the root of the trouble was in the wings. And in order to dispel the Icarus overtones we decided on an air balloon. This was a clumsy object put together from skins, ropes and rags, and we felt it rid the episode of spurious rhetoric and turned it into a unique happening.

The first thing to describe is the event, not your attitude to it. Your attitude has to be made clear by the film as a whole, to be part of its total impact. In a mosaic each separate piece is of a particular, single colour. It may be blue, or white, or red—they are all different. And then you look at the completed picture and see what the author had in mind.

. . . I love cinema. There is still a lot that 1 don't know: what I am going to work on, what I shall do later, how everything will turn out, whether my work will actually correspond to the principles to which I now adhere, to the system of working hypotheses I put forward. There are too many temptations on every side: stereotypes, preconceptions, commonplaces, artistic ideas other than one's own. And really it's so easy to shoot a scene beautifully, for effect, for acclaim . . . But you only have to take one step in that direction and you are lost.

Cinema should be a means of exploring the most complex problems of our time, as vital as those which for centuries have been the subject of literature, music and painting. It is only a question of searching, each time searching out afresh the path, the channel, to be followed by cinema. I am convinced that for any one of us our film-making will turn out to be a fruitless and hopeless affair if we fail to grasp precisely and unequivocally the specific character of cinema, and if we fail to find in ourselves our own key to it.

Solaris
At *work on the film.*

Solaris
Audrey Tarkovsky with the principal actress, Natalia Bondarchuk, during shooting.

CHAPTER IV

Cinema's destined role

Each of the arts has its own poetic meaning, and cinema is no exception. It has a particular role, its own destiny—it came into being in order to express a specific area of life, the meaning of which up till then had not found expression in any existing art form. Everything new in art emerged in answer to a spiritual need and its function is to ask those questions which are supremely relevant to our epoch.

In this connection I am reminded of a curious observation of Father Pavel Florensky's[13] in his book, *The konostasis.* He says that the inverted perspective in the works of that period was not the result of Russian icon-painters being unaware of the optical laws which had been assimilated by the Italian Renaissance, after being developed in Italy by Leon Battista Alberti.[14] Florensky argues, convincingly, that it was not possible to observe nature without discovering perspective, it was bound to be noticed. For the time being, however, it might not be needed—it could be ignored. So the inverted perspective in ancient Russian painting, the denial of Renaissance perspective, expresses the need to throw light on certain spiritual problems which Russian painters, unlike their Italian counterparts of the Quattrocento, had taken upon themselves. (One account has it, incidentally, that Andrey Rublyov had actually visited Venice, in which case he must have been aware of what Italian painters had been doing with perspective.)

If we round off its date of birth, cinema can be said to be contemporary with the twentieth century. That is no accident. It means that about a hundred years ago the point was reached when a new muse had to emerge.

Cinema was the first art form to come into being as a result of a technological invention, in answer to a vital need. It was the instrument which humanity had to have in order to increase its mastery over the real world. For the domain of any art form is limited to one aspect of our spiritual and emotional discovery of surrounding reality.

As he buys his ticket, it's as if the cinema-goer were seeking to make up for the gaps in his own experience, throwing himself into a search for 'lost time'. In other words he seeks to fill that spiritual vacuum which has formed as a result of the specific conditions of his modern existence: constant activity, curtailment of human contact, and the materialist bent of modern education.

Of course one can say that the inadequacy of a person's spiritual experience may also be made good through the other arts and through literature. (As soon as one thinks of looking for 'lost time', of course one is reminded of the title of Proust's volumes.) But not one of the old and 'respectable' arts has such a mass audience as cinema. Perhaps the rhythm, the way in which cinema conveys to its audience that condensed experience which the author wants to share, corresponds most closely with the rhythms of modern life and their time deficiency. Perhaps it would even be true to say that the public have been caught up in the cinema's own dynamic, not merely swept away by the excitement it generates? (One thing, however, is certain: the mass audience can only be a mixed blessing, for it is always the inert sections of the public that are most easily impressed by excitement and novelty.)

Modern audience reactions to any film are different in principle from the impressions produced by the works of the 'twenties and 'thirties. When thousands of people in Russia went to see *Chapayev,*[15] for instance, the impression, or rather, the inspiration, produced by the picture was exactly appropriate, as it seemed then, to its quality: audiences were being offered a work of art, but it attracted them principally because it was an example of a new and unfamiliar genre.

We now have a situation where audiences very often prefer commercial trash to Bergman's *Persona* or Bresson's L'*Argent.* Professionals find themselves shrugging, and predicting that serious, significant works will have no success with the general public . . .

What is the explanation? Decline of taste or impoverishment of repertoire? Neither and both.

It is simply that cinema now exists, and is evolving, under new conditions. That total, enthralling impression which once overwhelmed the audiences of the 'thirties was explained by the universal delight of those who were witnessing and rejoicing over the birth of a new art form, which furthermore had recently acquired sound. By the very fact of its existence this new art, which displayed a new kind of wholeness, a new kind of image, and

revealed hitherto unexplored areas of reality, could not but astound its audiences and turn them into passionate enthusiasts.

Less than twenty years now separate us from the twenty-first century. In the course of its existence, through its peaks and troughs, cinema has travelled a long and tortuous path. The relationship that has grown up between artistic films and the commercial cinema is not an easy one, and the gulf between the two becomes wider every day. Nonetheless, films arc being made all the time that are undoubtedly landmarks in the history of cinema.

Audiences have become more discerning in their attitude to films. Cinema as such long ago ceased to amaze them as a new and original phenomenon; and at the same time it is expected to answer a far wider range of individual needs. Audiences have developed their likes and dislikes. That means that the film-maker in turn has an audience that is constant, his own circle. Divergence of taste on the part of audiences can be extreme, and this is in no way regrettable or alarming; the fact that people have their own aesthetic criteria indicates a growth of self-awareness.

Directors are going deeper into the areas which concern them. There are faithful audiences and favourite directors, so that there is no question of thinking in terms of unqualified success with the public—that is, if one is talking about cinema not as commercial entertainment but as art. Indeed, mass popularity suggests what is known as mass culture, and not art.

The pundits of Soviet cinema maintain that mass culture lives and flourishes in the West, while Soviet artists are called to hold sway over 'true art for the people'; in fact they are interested in making films of mass appeal, and while they speak grandiloquently of the development of 'the true realistic traditions' of Soviet cinema, they are in fact quietly giving the go-ahead to films far removed from the real world and from those problems with which the people actually live. Pointing at the success of the Soviet cinema in the 'thirties, they dream of mass audiences here and now, doing their damnedest to pretend that nothing has changed in the meantime in the relationship between film and public.

However, the past—mercifully—cannot be brought back; individual self-awareness and the status of personal views on life are becoming more important. Cinema is therefore evolving, its form becoming more complex, its arguments deeper; it is exploring questions which bring together widely divergent people with

different histories, contrasting characters and dissimilar temperaments. One can no longer imagine a unanimous reaction to even the least controversial artistic work, however profound, vivid or talented. The collective consciousness propagated by the new socialist ideology has been forced by the pressures of real life to give way to personal self-awareness. The opportunity is now there for film-maker and audience to engage in constructive and purposeful dialogue of the kind that both sides desire and need. The two are united by common interests and inclinations, closeness of attitude, even spiritual kinship. Without these things even the most interesting individuals are in danger of boring each other, of arousing antipathy or mutual irritation. That is normal; it is obvious that even the classics do not occupy an identical place in each person's subjective experience.

Anybody capable of appreciating art will naturally limit the range of his favourite works according to his own deepest inclinations. Nobody who is capable of making his own judgement and selection is omnivorous. Nor, for the person with a developed aesthetic sense, can there be any stereotype, objective evaluation. (Who are these judges who have placed themselves above general opinion for the purpose of making objective judgements?)

However, the present relationship between artist and audience is proof of the *subjective* interest in art of an enormously wide range of people.

In cinema, works of art seek to form a kind of concentration of experience, materialised by the artist in his film: as it were an illusion of the truth, its image. The director's personality defines the pattern of his relationship with the world and limits his connections with it; and his choice of those connections only makes the world he reflects the more subjective.

Achieving the *truth* of a film image—these are mere words, the name of a dream, a statement of intent which, however, each time it is realised, becomes a demonstration of what is specific in the director's choice, of what is unique in his position. To seek one's *own* truth (and there can be no other, no 'common' truth) is to search for one's *own* language, the system of expression destined to give form to one's *own* ideas. Only by collecting together the films of different directors do we arrive at a picture of the modern world which is more or less realistic and has some claim to be called a full account of what concerns, excites and puzzles our contemporaries: an embodiment,

Now *if Christ be preached that he rose from the dead, how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead? But if there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen: and if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain . . .*

But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first-fruits of them that slept. For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive . . .

I Cor 15, 15-19, 26-29

in effect, of that generalised experience which modern man lacks and which the art of cinema lives to make incarnate.

I have to admit that before the appearance of my first film I did not feel that I was a director, nor did the cinema have any inkling of my existence.

Only after *Ivan* did I know that I must work in cinema; up till then it had been such a closed world for me that I had no clear idea of the role for which I was being prepared by my teacher, Mikhail Ilych Romm.'[6] It was like travelling along parallel lines which never touched or influenced each other. The future did not meet the present. It was not clear to me, at the deepest level, what my function was to be. I still could not see that goal which is reached only through struggle with oneself, and which signifies an attitude voiced, formulated for all time. That goal will remain for ever constant—though the tactics involved in its pursuit may change—for it constitutes a person's ethical function.

That was a time when, professionally, I was building up a repertoire of expressive techniques; and at the same time I was looking for forerunners, for parents, for a single line of tradition, that would not be broken by my illiteracy and ignorance. I was simply getting to know cinema in practice: the field in which I was to work. My experience illustrates—yet again—that teaching someone in a college doesn't make him into an artist. Becoming an artist does not merely mean learning something, acquiring professional techniques and methods. Indeed, as someone has said, in order to write well you have to forget about grammar. Though, of course, in order to forget it you have first to know it.

Anyone who decides to become a director is risking the rest of his life, and he alone is answerable. It should be the conscious decision of someone mature; the huge team of teachers who prepare the artist cannot answer for the years sacrificed and lost by those who fail and who often came in straight from school. The selection of students for colleges of this type should not be made pragmatically, for it involves a question of ethics: eighty per cent of those who have studied to become directors or actors go on to fill the ranks of the professionally inadequate who spend the rest of their lives orbiting around the cinema. The great majority of these failures lack the strength to give up filming and move on to another profession. After dedicating six years to the study of cinema it is hard for people to give up their illusions.

The first generation of Soviet film-makers was an organic phenomenon. They appeared in answer to a call of heart and soul. However amazing, what they did was natural for their time—a fact which many people now fail to appreciate. The point is that classical Soviet cinema was the work of young men, almost boys, not always capable of knowing what their work meant or accepting responsibility for it.

All the same, the years at the Institute of Cinematography were instructive in that they paved the way, little by little, for today's assessment of that training. As Hermann Hesse says in *The Glass Bead Game*, 'Truth has to be lived, not taught. Prepare for battle!'

A movement becomes truthful, that is, capable of transforming tradition into social energy, only when the history of that tradition, the way it grows and changes, coincides with (or even overtakes) the objective logic of the development of society.

Indeed, Hesse's words quoted above could well serve as an epigraph to *Audrey Rublyov*.

Underlying the concept of Andrey Rublyov's character is the schema of a return to the beginning; I hope this emerges in the film as the natural and organic progression of the 'free' flow of life created on the screen. For us the story of Rublyov is really the story of a 'taught', or imposed concept, which burns up in the atmosphere of living reality to arise again from the ashes as a fresh and newly-discovered truth.

Trained in the Monastery of the Trinity and St Sergius, under the tutelage of Sergey Radonezhsky, Andrey, untouched by life, has assimilated the basic axiom: love, community, brotherhood. At that time of civil strife and fratricidal fighting, and with the country trampled underfoot by the Tartars, Sergey's motto, inspired by reality and by his own political percipience, summarised the need for unity, for centralisation, in the face of the Mongol-Tartar yoke, as the only way to ensure survival and achieve national and religious dignity and independence.

The young Andrey received these ideas intellectually; he was brought up on them, had them drummed into him.

Once outside the walls of the monastery he is confronted by a reality that is as unfamiliar and unexpected as it is appalling. The tragic nature of that time can be explained only in terms of a culmination of the need for change.

It is easy to see how ill-equipped Andrey was for this confrontation

with life, after being protected from it within the rarified precincts of the monastery, from which he had a distorted view of the life which stretched out far beyond it. . . . And only after going through the circles of suffering, at one with the fate of his people, and losing his faith in an idea of good that could not be reconciled with reality, does Andrey come back to the point from which he started: to the idea of love, good, brotherhood. But now he has experienced for himself the great, sublime truth of that idea as a statement of the aspirations of his tormented people.

Traditional truths remain truths only when they are vindicated by personal experience . . . My years as a student, when I was preparing to enter the profession in which evidently I am destined to remain for the rest of my days, seem pretty strange . . .

We worked a lot on the set doing exercises in directing or acting interpretation, for student audiences, and wrote a good deal, making scenarios for ourselves from teaching material. We didn't see many films (and now, I understand, Institute students sec them even less), because teachers and those in authority were afraid of the baneful influence of Western films, which the students might take less 'critically' than they should . . . Of course this is absurd: how can anyone by-pass contemporary world cinema and still become a professional; the students are reduced, as it were, to inventing the bicycle—that is, if they manage to invent it. Can one imagine a painter who doesn't go to museums or to his colleagues' studios, or a writer who doesn't read books? A cinematographer who doesn't see films?—yes, there he is, the S.I.C. student who is virtually debarred from seeing the achievements of world cinema while he is studying in the Institute.

I still remember the first film I managed to see at the Institute on the eve of the entry exams—*The Lower Depths* by Renoir, based on Gorky's play. I was left with a strange, puzzling impression, a feeling of something forbidden, clandestine, unnatural. Jean Gabin played Pepel, Louis Jouvet the Baron . . .

In my fourth year, my state of metaphysical contemplation suddenly gave way to a burst of vitality. Our energies were channelled first into practical exercises and then into the making of a pre-diploma piece which I directed in collaboration with a fellow student. It was a relatively long film, produced with the facilities of the Institute and Central Television studios, about sappers defusing a German arms store left over from the war.

Working from my own—alas, quite useless—script, I did not feel at all that I was approaching an understanding of what is called cinema. Matters were made worse by the fact that all the time we were filming we were longing to make a full-length work—or, as we wrongly imagined, a 'real' film. In fact, making a short film is almost harder than making a full-length one: it demands an unerring sense of form. But in those days we were exercised above all by ambitious ideas of production and organisation, while the concept of the film as a work of art consistently eluded us. As a result we were incapable of taking advantage of our work on the short film in order to define our own aesthetic aims. However, I have still not given up hope of a short film one day: I even have some rough drafts in my note-book. One of these is a poem by my father, Arseniy Alexandrovich Tarkovsky, which he himself was to have read. Although now, of course, I don't even know if I shall ever see him again. In the meantime I have used it in *Nostalgia:*

As a child I once fell ill
With hunger and fear. Off my lips I peeled
Hard scales, and licked my lips. 1 remember
Still the taste of it, saltish and cool.
And all the time I walked and walked and walked.
Sat down on the front stairs to warm myself,
Walked my lightheaded way as if dancing
To the rat-catcher's tune, riverwards. Sat down
To warm on the stairs, shivering every which way.
And mother stands there beckoning, looks as if
She's close, but I can't go up to her:
I move towards her, she stands seven steps away,
Beckons me; I move towards her, she stands
Seven steps away and beckons me.
I felt too hot,
Undid my collar button and lay down,
Then there were trumpets blaring, light beating
Down on my eyelids, horses galloping, mother
Was flying above the roadway, beckoned me
And flew away . . .
And now my dream is of
A hospital, white beneath the apple trees,
And a white sheet beneath my chin,

And a white doctor looking down at me,
And a white nurse standing at my feet
And her wings moving. And there they stayed.
And mother came, and beckoned me—
And flew away . . .

Translated by Kitty Hunter-Blair.

Long ago I thought of using the following sequence for the poem.

Scene 1: Establishing shot. Aerial view of a town; autumn or early winter. Slow zoom in to a tree standing by the stucco wall of a monastery.

Scene 2: Close shot. Low angle shot, zoom in to puddles, grass, moss, shot in close-up to give the effect of a landscape. In the first shot town noises can be heard—harsh and insistent—these die away completely by the end of the 2nd shot.

Scene 3: Close shot. A bonfire. Someone's hand stretches out an old, crumpled envelope towards the dying flame. The fire flares up. The camera tilts for a low angle shot of the father (the author of the poem), standing by a tree and looking at the fire. Then he bends down, evidently to tend the fire. The shot widens to a broad, autumnal landscape. The sky is overcast. Far away the bonfire is burning in the middle of the field. The father is poking it. He straightens up, turns, and walks away from the camera over the fields. Slow zoom from behind to medium shot. The father walks on. All the time the zoom lens shows him the same size. Then he gradually turns until he is shown in profile. The father vanishes into the trees. From out of the trees, and continuing along the father's path, appears the son. Gradual zoom in to the son's face, which by the end of the shot is just in front of the camera.

Scene 4: From the point of view of the son. Elevation shot and zoom in: roads, puddles, withered grass. A white feather falls, circling, down into a puddle. (I used the feather in *Nostalgia.)*

Scene 5: Close-up. The son looks at the fallen feather, and then up at the sky. He bends, then straightens up and walks out of frame. Pull focus to long shot: the son picks up the feather and walks on. He vanishes into the trees, from which, walking in the same direction, appears the poet's grandson. In his hand is a white feather. Dusk is falling. The grandson walks over the field. Zoom in to close-up of the grandson, in profile; he suddenly notices something out of frame and stops. Pan in the direction of his gaze. Long shot of an angel standing at the edge of the darkening forest. Dusk is falling. Darkness descends as the focus blurs.

The poem can be heard from about the beginning of the third shot up to the end of the fourth; between the bonfire and the falling feather. Almost at the moment when the poem finishes, perhaps a little earlier, can be heard the end of the finale of Haydn's 'Farewell Symphony', which comes to an end as darkness falls.

Probably if I were to make the film, it would not turn out the same on the screen as it is in my notebook; I cannot agree with Rene Clair's view that once you have thought of a film it only remains for you to shoot it. That is never the way I bring a script to its realisation on the screen. Not that I find myself making radical alterations to the original idea of a movie; the initial impulse for a film remains unchanged and has to be consummated in the finished work. However, in the course of shooting, editing, making the sound track, the idea goes on being crystallised into ever more precise forms, and the image structure of the film is not finally decided until the last minute. The process of producing any work means struggling with the material, straining to master it in order to bring to full and perfect realisation that one conception that remains alive for the artist in its first, immediate impact.

Whatever happens, the point of the film, the thing that gave one the idea in the first place, must not be 'spilt' in the course of the work: particularly since the conception is becoming embodied through the medium of cinema: that is, using the images of reality itself—for it must come alive in the flesh of the film only through direct contact with the actual, substantial world. . . .

It is a grave, I would even say, fatal, mistake to try to make a film correspond exactly with what is written on paper, to translate onto

the screen structures that have been thought out in advance, purely intellectually. That simple operation can be carried out by any professional craftsman. Because it is a living process, artistic creation demands a capacity for direct observation of the ever-changing material world, which is constantly in movement.

The painter with the help of colour, the writer—of words, the composer—of sounds, are all engaged in a relentless, grinding struggle to master the material on which their work is based.

Cinema came into being as a means of recording the very *movement* of reality: factual, specific, within time and unique; of reproducing again and again the moment, instant by instant, in its fluid mutability—that instant over which we find ourselves able to gain mastery by imprinting it on film. That is what determines the medium of cinema. The author's conception becomes a living, human witness that can excite and hold an audience only when we are able to plunge it into the rushing current of reality, which we hold fast in each tangible, concrete moment we depict—one and unique in texture as in feeling . . . Otherwise the film is doomed—it will die before it is born.

After I had finished *Ivan's Childhood* I felt I was somewhere on the very edge of cinema. As in the game of'warm and cold'—you can feel someone's presence in the dark room even if he is holding his breath; it was somewhere right next to me. My own excitement made me realise that: like the restlessness of a gundog that has picked up a scent. A miracle had happened—the film had worked. Now something else was being demanded of me: I had to understand what cinema is.

That was when the idea of 'imprinted time' occurred to me; an idea that allowed me to develop a principle, with points of reference that would hold my fantasy in check as I searched for form, for ways of handling images. A principle that would free my hands, making it possible to cut away everything unnecessary, alien or irrelevant, so that the question of what the film needed and what it must avoid would be solved of itself.

I now know two directors who worked with rigid self-imposed constraints to help them create a true form for the realisation of their idea: Mizoguchi and Bresson. But Bresson is perhaps the only man in the cinema to have achieved the perfect fusion of the finished work with a concept theoretically formulated beforehand. I know of no other artist as consistent as he is in this respect. His guiding principle was the elimination of what is known as expressiveness, in the sense that he wanted to do away with the frontier between the image and actual life; that is, to render life itself graphic and expressive. No special feeding in of material, nothing laboured, nothing that smacks of deliberate generalisation. Paul Valery could have been thinking of Bresson when he wrote: 'Perfection is achieved only by avoiding everything that might make for conscious exaggeration' Apparently no more than modest, simple observation of life. The principle has something in common with Zen art, where, in our perception, precise observation of life passes paradoxically into sublime artistic imagery. Perhaps only in Pushkin is the relationship between form and content so magical, God-given and organic. But Pushkin was like Mozart in that he created as he breathed, without having to construct working principles. . . . And in the poetry of film, Bresson, more than anyone else, has united theory and practice in his work with a singleness of purpose, consistently and uniformly.

A clear, sober view of the conditions of one's task makes it easier to find a form exactly adequate to one's thoughts and feelings, without recourse to experiment.

Experiment—not to say, search! Can a concept like experiment have any relevance, for instance, to the poet who wrote:

> *Shadows of night lie on the Georgian hills;*
> *In front of me roars the Aragva.*
> *1 feel at ease and sad; there's a radiance in my sighs,*
> *My sighs are all of you,*
> *Of you, and you alone . . . My melancholy*
> *Is untouched by torment or distraction,*
> *And my heart is burning and loving once more*
> *Because it cannot do other than love."*

Nothing could be more meaningless than the word 'search' applied to a work of art. It covers impotence, inner emptiness, lack of true creative consciousness, petty vainglory. An artist who is seeking'—these words are merely the cover for a middle-brow acceptance of inferior work. Art is not science, one can't start experimenting. When an experiment remains on the level of experiment, and not a stage in the process of producing the finished

"Of course no translation can do justice to this perfect poem.—Tr.

work which the artist went through in private—then the aim of art has not been attained. Again, Paul Valéry has an interesting comment on this in his essay, 'Degas, Dance, Design':

> 'They [some painters contemporary with Degas—A.T.] managed to confuse exercise with opus, and took as an end what should merely be means. Nothing could be more "modern". For a work to be "finished", all that reveals or suggests its manufacture has to be made invisible. The artist, according to the time-honoured stipulation, must show himself only in his style, and must keep up his exertions until his labour has erased every trace of labour. However, as concern with the individual and with the moment gradually came to prevail over concern with the work itself and its perpetuation, that condition for finishing began to seem not only useless and tedious, but actually at variance with *truth*, *sensitivity* and the manifestation of *genius.* Personality became all-important, even for the public. The sketch acquired the value of the picture'

Indeed, in the art of the latter half of the twentieth century, mystery has been lost. Today artists want instantaneous and total recognition—immediate payment for something that takes place in the realm of the spirit. In this respect the figure of Kafka is outstanding: he printed nothing during his lifetime, and in his will instructed his executor to burn all he had written; in mentality he belonged, morally speaking, to the past. That was why he suffered so much, being out of tune with his time.

What passes for art today is for the most part a demonstration of itself, for it is a fallacy to suppose that method can become the meaning and aim of art. Nonetheless, most modem artists spend their time self-indulgently demonstrating method.

The whole question of *avant-garde* is peculiar to the twentieth century, to the time when art has steadily been losing its spirituality. The situation is worst in the visual arts, which today are almost totally devoid of spirituality. The accepted view is that this situation reflects the despiritualised state of society. And of course, on the level of simple observation of the tragedy, I agree: that is what it does reflect. But art must transcend as well as observe; its role is to bring spiritual vision to bear on reality: as did Dostoievsky, the first to have given inspired utterance to the incipient disease of the age.

The whole concept of *avant-garde* in art is meaningless. I can see

Solaris
Chris Kelvin (Donatas Banionis), in the space station.

what it means as applied to sport, for instance. But to apply it to art would be to accept the idea of progress in art; and though progress has an obvious place in technology—more perfect machines, capable of carrying out their functions better and more accurately—how can anyone be more advanced in art? How could Thomas Mann be said to be better than Shakespeare?

People tend to talk about experiment and search above all in relation to the *avant-garde.* But what does it mean? How can you experiment in art? Have a go and see how it turns out? But if it hasn't worked, then there's nothing to see except the private problem of the person who has failed. For the work of art carries within it an integral aesthetic and philosophical unity; it is an organism, living and developing according to its own laws. Can one talk of experiment in relation to the birth of a child? It is senseless and immoral.

Could it be that the people who started talking about *avant-garde* were those who were not capable of separating the wheat from the tares? Confused by the new aesthetic structures, lost in the face of the real discoveries and achievements, not capable of finding any criteria of their own, they included under the one head of *avant-garde* anything that was not familiar and easily understood—just in case, in order not to be wrong? 1 like the story of Picasso, who when asked about his 'search' replied wittily and pertinently (clearly irritated by the question): 'I don't seek, I find'

And can search really be applied to anyone as great as Lev

Mirror
The old house, reconstructed from family photographs, in which the Narrator was born and spent his childhood, and in which his father and mother lived.

Tolstoy: the old man, you understand, was seeking! It's ridiculous; though some Soviet critics almost say just that, pointing to how he lost his way with his search for God and non-violent resistance to evil—so he can't have been looking in the right place . . .

Search as a process (and there is no other way of looking at it) has the same bearing on the complete work as wandering through the forest with a basket in search of mushrooms has to the basketful of mushrooms when you have found them. Only the latter—the full basket—is a work of art: the contents are real and unconditional, whereas wandering through the forest remains the personal affair of someone who enjoys walking and fresh air. On this level deception amounts to evil intent. 'The bad habit of mistaking metonym for revelation, metaphor for proof, a spate of words for fundamental knowledge, and oneself for a genius—that is an evil which is with us when we are born,' observes Valéry, again, sarcastically, in

'Introduction to The System of Leonardo da Vinci'.

In cinema search and experiment present even more difficultties. You are given a roll of film, and the equipment, and you have to fix on the film what matters, what the film is being made for.

The idea and aim of a picture have to be clear to the director from the outset—quite apart from the fact that nobody is going to pay him for vague experiments. Whatever happens, no matter how much the artist searches—and that remains his private, purely personal affair—from the moment those researches are fixed on film (retakes are rare, and in manufacturing language mean defective products), that is, from the moment his idea has become objectivised, one must assume that the artist has already found the thing he wants to tell the audience about through cinema, and is no longer wandering in the dark.

In the next chapter we shall look in detail at the forms in which an idea becomes embodied in a film. For the moment I want to say a few words about the rapidity with which films become dated, a phenomenon which is regarded as one of its essential attributes, and in fact has to do with the ethical aim of a picture.

It would be absurd to speak, for instance, of the *Divine Comedy* being dated. And yet films which seemed a few years ago to be major events unexpectedly turn out to be feeble, inept, like school-boy attempts. And why? The main reason as I see it is that as a rule the film-maker doesn't see his work as morally exacting, as an act of crucial significance to him personally: and true artistic work can be done in no other spirit. A work becomes dated as a result of the conscious effort to be expressive and contemporary; these are not things to be achieved: they have to be in you.

In those arts which count their existence in tens of centuries the artist sees himself, naturally and without question, as more than narrator or interpreter: above all he is an individual who has decided to formulate for others, with complete sincerity, his truth about the world . . . Film-makers, on the other hand, have a feeling of being second-rate, and that is their undoing.

Actually, I can see why. Cinema is still looking for its language and is only now coming somewhere near grasping it. The cinema's progress towards self-awareness has always been hampered by its equivocal position, hanging between art and the factory: the original sin of its genesis in the market-place.

The question of what constitutes the language of the cinema is far

Mirror *The Mother (Margarita Terekhova): Arseniy Tarkovsky's poem,* PERVIYE SVIDANYA— *FIRST MEETINGS.*

First Meetings

Every moment that we were together
Was a celebration, like Epiphany,
In all the world the two of us alone.
You were bolder, lighter than a bird's wing,
Heady as vertigo you ran downstairs
Two steps at a time, and led me
Through damp lilac, into your domain
On the other side, beyond the mirror.

When night came I was granted favour,
The gates before the altar opened wide
And in the dark our nakedness was radiant
As slowly it inclined. And waking
I would say, 'Blessings upon you!'
And knew my benediction was presumptuous:
You slept, the lilac stretched out from the table
To touch your eyelids with a universe of blue,
And you received the touch upon your eyelids
And they were still, and still your hand was warm.

Vibrant rivers lay inside the crystal,
Mountains loomed through mist, seas foamed,
And you held a crystal sphere in your hands,
Seated on a throne as still you slept,
And—God in heaven!—you belonged to me.
You awoke and you transfigured
The words that people' utter every day,
And speech was filled to overflowing
With ringing power, and the word 'you'
Discovered its new purport: it meant 'king.
Ordinary objects were at once transfigured,
Everything—the jug, the basin—when
Placed between us like a sentinel
Stood water, laminary and firm.

We were led, not knowing whither,
Like mirages before us there receded
Cities built by miracle,
Wild mint was laying itself beneath our feet,
Birds travelling by the same route as ourselves,
And in the river fishes swam upstream;
And the sky unrolled itself before our eyes.

~ When fate was following in our tracks
Like a madman with a razor in his hand."

Arseniy Tarkovsky
(Translated by Kitty Hunter-Blair)

from simple; it is not yet clear even to professionals. When we talk of the language of cinema as modern or not modern, we tend to gloss over the essential issues and see only a collection of current techniques, as often as not borrowed from the neighbour arts. We thus fall captive to the transient, chance assumptions of the moment. It becomes possible to say, for instance, that today 'the flashback is the cinema's last word', and tomorrow to declare just as presumptuously that 'any dislocation of time is finished in cinema, the tendency today is towards classical plot development.' Surely no method can of itself either date or be right for the spirit of the time? The first thing to establish must still be what the author means, and only then—why he has used this or that form. Of course we are not discussing the wholesale adoption of well-worn methods—that comes under imitation and mechanical craftsmanship and as such is not an artistic problem.

The methods of film change, of course, like those of any other art form. I have already mentioned how the first cinema audiences ran from the theatre in terror at the sight of the steam-engine advancing upon them from the screen, and screamed with horror when they thought a close-up was a severed head. Today these methods in themselves arouse no emotion in anyone, and we use as generally accepted punctuation marks what yesterday appeared as a shattering discovery; and it wouldn't occur to anyone to suggest that the close-up is out of date.

Before passing into general use, however, discoveries of methods and means have to come about as the natural and only way for an artist, using his own language, to communicate as fully as possible his own perception of the world. The artist never looks for methods as such, for the sake of aesthetics; he is forced, painfully, to devise them as a means of imparting faithfully his—author's—view of reality.

The engineer invents machines, guided by people's daily needs—he wants to make labour, and thus life, easier for them. However, not by bread alone . . . The artist could be said to extend his range in order to further communication, to enable people to understand one another on the highest intellectual, emotional, psychological and philosophical level. Thus the artist's efforts, too, are directed towards making life better, more perfect, making it easier for people to understand one another.

Not that an artist is necessarily simple and clear in his account of himself or in his reflections on life—these can indeed be hard to understand. But communication always demands exertion. Without it, indeed without passionate commitment, it is actually not possible for one person to understand another.

And so the discovery of a method becomes the discovery of someone who has acquired the gift of speech. And at that point we may speak of the birth of an image; that is, of a revelation. And those means which only yesterday were devised to communicate a truth attained through pain and toil, by tomorrow may well become—indeed do become—a well-tried stereotype.

If a skilful craftsman uses highly developed modern means to speak of some subject which does not touch him personally, and if he has a certain taste, he can for a time take his audiences in. However, the ephemeral nature of his film will be clear soon enough; sooner or later time inexorably shows up the hollowness of any work that is less than the expression of a unique, personal worldview. For artistic creation is not just a way of formulating information that exists objectively, merely requiring a few professional skills. In the end it is the very form of the artist's existence, his sole means of expression, and his alone. And the limp word, search, clearly does not apply to a triumph over a muteness that demands unrelieved, superhuman effort.

CHAPTER V

The film image

> 'Let us put it like this: a spiritual—that is, significant—phenomenon is "significant" precisely because it exceeds its own limits, serves as expression and symbol of something spiritually wider and more universal, an entire world of feelings and thoughts, embodied within it with greater or less felicity—that is the measure of its significance.'
>
> —Thomas Mann, *The Magic Mountain*

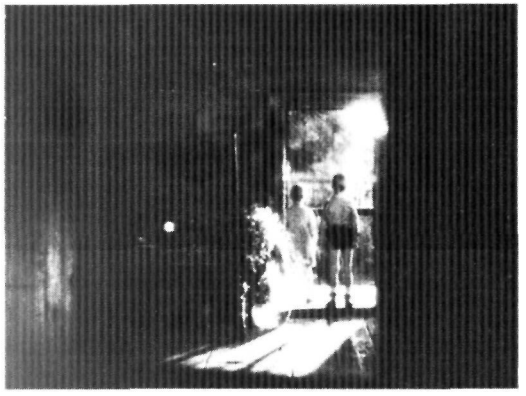
It is hard to imagine that a concept like *artistic image* could ever be expressed in a precise thesis, easily formulated and understandable. It is not possible, nor would one wish it to be so. I can only say that the image stretches out into infinity, and leads to the absolute. And even what is known as the 'idea' of the image, many dimensional and with many meanings, cannot, in the very nature of things, be put into words. But it does find expression in art. When thought is expressed in an artistic image, it means that its one form has been found, the form that comes nearest to conveying the author's world, to making incarnate his longing for the ideal.

What I want to attempt here is to define the parameters of a possible system of what are generally termed images, a system within which I can feel spontaneous and free.

If you throw even a cursory glance into the past, at the life which lies behind you, not even recalling its most vivid moments, you are struck every time by the singularity of the events in which you took part, the unique individuality of the characters whom you met. This singularity is like the dominant note of every moment of existence; in each moment of life, the life principle itself is unique. The artist therefore tries to grasp that principle and make it incarnate, new each time; and each time he hopes, though in vain, to achieve an exhaustive image of the Truth of human existence. The quality of beauty is in the truth of life, newly assimilated and imparted by the artist, in fidelity to his personal vision.

Anyone at all subtle will always distinguish in people's behaviour truth from fabrication, sincerity from pretence, integrity from

Mirror *The Director at the site for the fire.*



Mirror *The fire sequence.*

affectation. From experience of life a kind of filter grows up in the perception, to stop us giving credence to phenomena in which the structural pattern is broken—whether deliberately so or inadvertently, through ineptness.

There are people incapable of lying. Others who lie with inspiration, convincingly. Others again don't know how to, but are incapable of not lying, and do so drably and hopelessly. Within our terms of reference—namely, precise observation of the logic of life—only the second category detect the beat of truth and can follow the capricious twists of life with an almost geometrical accuracy.

The image is indivisible and elusive, dependent upon our consciousness and on the real world which it seeks to embody. If the world is inscrutable, then the image will be so too. It is a kind of equation, signifying the correlation between truth and the human consciousness, bound as the latter is by Euclidean space. We cannot comprehend the totality of the universe, but the poetic image is able to express that totality.

The image is an impression of the truth, a glimpse of the truth permitted to us in our blindness. The incarnate image will be faithful when its articulations are palpably the expression of truth, when they make it unique, singular—as life itself is, even in its simplest manifestations.

The image as a precise observation of life takes us straight back to Japanese poetry.

What captivates me here is the refusal even to hint at the kind of final image meaning that can be gradually deciphered like a charade. Haikku cultivates its images in such a way that they mean nothing beyond themselves, and at the same time express so much that it is not possible to catch their final meaning. The more closely the image corresponds to its function, the more impossible it is to constrict it within a clear intellectual formula. The reader of haikku has to be absorbed into it as into nature, to plunge in, lose himself in its depth, as in the cosmos where there is no bottom and no top.

Look at these haikku by Basho:

The old pond was still
A frog jumped in the water
And a splash was heard.

Or:

Reeds cut for thatching
'The stumps now stand forgotten
Sprinkled with soft snow.

Or again:

Why this lethargy?
They could hardly wake me up.
Spring rain pattering.

How simply and accurately life is observed. What discipline of mind and nobility of imagination. The lines are beautiful, because the moment, plucked out and fixed, is one, and falls into infinity.

The Japanese poets knew how to express their visions of reality in three lines of observation. They did not simply observe it, but with supernal calm sought its ageless meaning. And the more precise the observation, the nearer it comes to being unique, and so to being an image. As Dostoievsky said, with remarkable insight, 'Life is more fantastic than any fiction.'

In cinema it is all the more the case that observation is the first principle of the image, which always has been inseparable from the photographic record. The film image is made incarnate, visible and four dimensional. But by no means every film shot can aspire to being an image of the world; as often as not it merely describes some specific aspect. Naturalistically recorded facts are in themselves utterly inadequate to the creation of the cinematic image. The image in cinema is based on the ability to present as an observation one's own perception of an object.

To take an illustration from prose: the end of Tolstoy's *The Death of Ivan Ilych* tells how an unkind, limited man, who is dying of cancer and has a nasty wife and a worthless daughter, wants to ask their forgiveness before he dies. At that moment, quite unexpectedly, he is filled with such a sense of goodness, that his family, preoccupied as they are only with clothes and balls, insensitive and unthinking, suddenly seem to him profoundly unhappy, deserving of all pity and forbearance. And then, on the point of death, he feels he is crawling along in some long, soft black pipe, like an intestine . . . In the distance there seems to be a glimmer of light, and he crawls on and can't reach the end, can't overcome that last barrier separating life from death. His wife and daughter stand by the

bedside. He wants to say, 'Forgive me.' And instead, at the last minute, utters, 'Let me through.'* Clearly that image, which shakes us to the very depths of our being, cannot be interpreted in one way only. Its associations reach far into our innermost feelings, reminding us of some obscure memories and experiences of our own, stunning us, stirring our souls like a revelation. At the risk of banality—it is so like life, like a truth that we had guessed at, that it can rival situations that we have already known or secretly imagined. In the Aristotelian thesis, we recognise as something familiar what has been expressed by a genius. How deep and multidimensional it becomes will depend on the psyche of the reader.

Let us look at Leonardo's portrait of 'A Young Lady With a Juniper', which we used in *Mirror* for the scene of the father's brief meeting with his children when he comes home on leave.

There are two things about Leonardo's images that are arresting. One is the artist's amazing capacity to examine the object from outside, standing back, looking from above the world—a characteristic of artists like Bach or Tolstoy. And the other, the fact that the picture affects us simultaneously in two opposite ways. It is not possible to say what impression the portrait finally makes on us. It is not even possible to say definitely whether we like the woman or not, whether she is appealing or unpleasant. She is at once attractive and repellent. There is something inexpressibly beautiful about her and at the same time repulsive, fiendish. And fiendish not at all in the romantic, alluring sense of the word; rather—beyond good and evil. Charm with a negative sign. It has an element of degeneracy—and of beauty. In *Mirror* we needed the portrait in order to introduce a timeless element into the moments that are succeeding each other before our eyes, and at the same time to juxtapose the portrait with the heroine, to emphasise in her and in the actress, Margarita Terekhova, the same capacity at once to enchant and to repel. . . .

If you try to analyse Leonardo's portrait, separating it into its components, it will not work. At any rate it will explain nothing. For the emotional effect exercised on us by the woman in the picture is powerful precisely because it is impossible to find in her anything that we can definitely prefer, to single out any one detail from the whole, to prefer any one, momentary impression to another, and make it our own, to achieve a balance in the way we look at the image

* In Russian 'Forgive me' is *prosteete;* 'let me through' is *propoosteete.* —Tr.

presented to us. And so there opens up before us the possibility of interaction with infinity, for the great function of the artistic image is to be a kind of detector of infinity . . . towards which our reason and our feelings go soaring, with joyful, thrilling haste.

Such feeling is awoken by the completeness of the image: it affects us by this very fact of being impossible to dismember. In isolation, each component part will be dead—or perhaps, on the contrary, down to its tiniest elements it will display the same characteristics as the complete, finished work. And these characteristics are produced by the interaction of opposed principles, the meaning of which, as if in communicating vessels, spills over from one into the other: the face of the woman painted by Leonardo is animated by an exalted idea and at the same time might appear perfidious and subject to base passions. It is possible for us to see any number of things in the portrait, and as we try to grasp its essence we shall wander through unending labyrinths and never find the way out. We shall derive deep pleasure from the realisation that we cannot exhaust it, or see to the end of it. A true artistic image gives the beholder a simultaneous experience of the most complex, contradictory, sometimes even mutually exclusive feelings.

It is not possible to catch the moment at which the positive goes over into its opposite, or when the negative starts moving towards the positive. Infinity is germane, inherent in the very structure of the image. In practice, however, a person invariably prefers one thing to another, selects, seeks out his own, sets a work of art in the context of his personal experience. And since everybody has certain tendencies in what he does, and asserts his own truth in great things as in small, as he adapts art to his daily needs he will interpret an artistic image to his own 'advantage'. He sets a work into the context of his life and hedges it about with his aphorisms; for great works are ambivalent and allow for widely differing interpretations.

I am always sickened when an artist underpins his system of images with deliberate tendentiousness or ideology. I am against his allowing his methods to be discernible at all. I often regret some of the shots I have allowed to stay in my own films; they seem to me now to be evidence of compromise and found their way into my films because I was insufficiently singleminded. If it were still possible, I would now happily cut out of *Mirror* the scene with the cock, even though that scene made a deep impression on many in the audience. But that was because I was playing 'give-away' with the audience.

When the exhausted heroine, almost at fainting-point, is making up her mind whether to cut off the cockerel's head, we shot her in close-up at high speed for the last ninety frames, in a patently unnatural light. Since on the screen it comes out in slow motion, it gives an effect of stretching the time-framework—we are plunging the audience into the heroine's state, putting a brake on that moment, highlighting it. This is bad, because the shot starts to have a purely literary meaning. We deform the actress's face independently of her, as it were playing the role for her. We serve up the emotion we want, squeeze it out by our own—director's—means. Her state becomes too clear, too easily read. And in the interpretation of a character's state of mind, something must always be left secret.

To quote a more successful example of a similar method, again from *Mirror:* a few frames of the printing-press scene are also shot in slow motion, but in this case it is barely perceptible. We made a point of doing it very delicately and carefully, so that the audience would not be aware of it straight away, but just have a vague feeling of something strange. We were not trying to underline an idea by using slow motion, but to bring out a state of mind through means other than acting.

In Kurosawa's version of *Macbeth* we find a perfect example. In the scene where Macbeth is lost in the forest, a lesser director would have the actors stumbling around in the fog in search of the right direction, bumping into trees. And what does the genius Kurosawa do? He finds a place with a distinctive, memorable tree. The horsemen go round in a circle, three times, so that the sight of the tree eventually makes it clear that they keep going past the same spot. The horsemen themselves don't realise that they long ago lost their way. In his treatment of the concept of space Kurosawa here displays the most subtle poetic approach, expressing himself without the slightest hint of mannerism or pretentiousness. For what could be simpler than setting the camera and following the characters around three times?

In a word, the image is not a certain *meaning,* expressed by the director, but an entire world reflected as a drop of water. Only in a drop of water!

There are no technical problems of expression in cinema once you know exactly what to say; if you see every cell of your picture from within and can feel it accurately. For instance, in the scene of the heroine's chance meeting with a stranger (played by Anatoliy Solonitsyn), it was important that after he leaves some sort of thread should be drawn to link these two who seem to have met quite fortuitously. Had he turned as he was walking away and glanced back at her expressively, it would all have been sequential and false. Then we thought of the gust of wind in the field, which attracts the stranger's attention because it is so unexpected: that is why he looks back . . .. In this case there is no question of, so to speak, 'catching the author out' because his game is so obvious.

When the audience is unaware of the reasons why the director has used a certain method, he is inclined to believe in the reality of what is happening on screen, to believe in the life the artist is observing. But if the audience, as the saying goes, catches the director out, knowing exactly why the latter has performed a particular 'expressive' trick, they will no longer sympathise with what is happening or be carried along by it, and will begin to *judge* its purpose and its execution. In other words the 'spring' against which Marx warned is beginning to stick out of the upholstery.

The function of the image, as Gogol said, is to express life itself, not ideas or arguments about life. It does not signify life or symbolise it, but embodies it, expressing its uniqueness. What then is true to type, and how does what is original and singular in art relate to it? If the image emerges as something unique, then is there any room for what is true to type?

The paradox is that the unique element in an artistic image mysteriously becomes the typical; for strangely enough the latter turns out to be in direct correlation with what is individual, idiosyncratic, unlike anything else. It is not when phenomena are recorded as ordinary and similar that we find what is true to type (though that is where it is generally thought to lie), but where phenomena are distinctive. The general could be said to thrust the particular forward, and then to fall back and remain outside the ostensible framework of the reproduction. It is simply assumed as the substructure of the unique phenomenon.

If that seems strange at first sight, one has only to remember that the artistic image must evoke no associations other than those which speak of the truth. (Here we are talking of the artist who creates the image rather than of the audience who see it.) As he starts work the artist has to believe that he is the first person ever to give form to a particular phenomenon. It is being done for the first time, and as only he feels it and understands it.

The artistic image is unique and singular, whereas the phenomena of life may well be entirely banal. Again, haikku:

> No, *not to my house.*
> *That one, pattering umbrella*
> *Went to my neighbour.*

In itself, a passer-by with an umbrella whom you have seen at some time in your life means nothing new; he is just one of the people hurrying along and keeping himself dry in the rain. But within the terms of the artistic image we have been considering, a moment of life, one and unique for the author, is recorded in a form that is perfect and simple. The three lines are sufficient to make us feel his mood: his loneliness, the grey, rainy weather outside the window, and the vain expectation that someone might by a miracle call into his solitary, god-forsaken dwelling. Situation and mood, meticulously recorded, achieve an amazingly wide, far-ranging expression.

At the beginning of these reflections we deliberately ignored what is known as the character image. At this point it could be useful to include it. Let us take Bashmachkin[17] and Onegin. As literary types they personify certain social laws, which are the precondition of their existence—that is on the one hand. On the other, they possess some universal human traits. All this is so: a character in literature may become typical if he reflects current patterns formed as a result of general laws of development. As types, therefore, Bashmachkin and Onegin have plenty of analogues in real life. As types, certainly! As artistic images they are nonetheless absolutely alone and inimitable. They are too concrete, seen too large by their authors, carry the latter's viewpoint too fully, for us to be able to say: 'Yes, Onegin, he's just like my neighbour.' The nihilism of Raskolnikov in historical and sociological terms is of course typical; but in the personal and individual terms of his image, he stands alone. Hamlet is undoubtedly a type as well; but where, in simple terms, have you ever seen a Hamlet?

We are faced with a paradox: the character image signifies the fullest possible expression of what is typical, and the more fully it expresses it, the more individual, the more original it becomes. It is an extraordinary thing, this image! In a sense it is far richer than life itself; perhaps precisely because it expresses the idea of absolute truth.

Do the images of Leonardo or Bach mean anything in functional terms? No—they mean nothing at all beyond what they mean themselves; that is the measure of their autonomy. They see the world as if for the first time, with no experience to weigh them down. They look at it with the independence of people who have only just arrived!

All creative work strives for simplicity, for perfectly simple expression; and this means reaching down into the furthest depths of the recreation of life. But that is the most painful part of creative work: finding the shortest path between what you want to say or express and its ultimate reproduction in the finished image. The struggle for simplicity is the painful search for a form adequate to the truth you have grasped. You long to be able to achieve great things while economising the means.

The striving for perfection leads an artist to make spiritual discoveries, to exert the utmost moral effort. Aspiration towards the absolute is the moving force in the development of mankind. For me the idea of realism in art is linked with that force. Art is realistic when it strives to express an ethical ideal. Realism is a striving for the truth, and truth is always beautiful. Here the aesthetic coincides with the ethical.

Time, rhythm and editing

Turning now to the film image as such, I immediately want to dispel the widely held idea that it is essentially 'composite'. This notion seems to me wrong because it implies that cinema is founded on the attributes of kindred art forms and has none specifically its own; and that is to deny that cinema is an art.

The dominant, all-powerful factor of the film image is *rhythm*, expressing the course of time within the frame. The actual passage of time is also made clear in the characters' behaviour, the visual treatment and the sound—but these are all accompanying features, the absence of which, theoretically, would in no way affect the existence of the film. One cannot conceive of a cinematic work with no sense of time passing through the shot, but one can easily imagine a film with no actors, music, decor or even editing. The Lumiere brothers' *Arrivée d'un Train*, already mentioned, was like that. So are one or two films of the American underground: there is one, for instance, which shows a man asleep; we then see him waking up,

and, by its own wizardry, the cinema gives that moment an unexpected and stunning aesthetic impact.

Or Pascal Aubier's[18] ten-minute film consisting of only one shot. First it shows the life of nature, majestic and unhurried, indifferent to human bustle and passions. Then the camera, controlled with virtuoso skill, moves to take in a tiny dot: a sleeping figure scarcely visible in the grass, on the slope of a hill. The dramatic denouement follows immediately. The passing of time seems to be speeded up, driven on by our curiosity. It is as if we steal cautiously up to him along with the camera, and, as we draw near, we realise that the man is dead. The next moment we are given more information: not only is he dead, he was killed; he is an insurgent who has died from wounds, seen against the background of an indifferent nature. We are thrown powerfully back by our memories to events which shake today's world.

You will remember that the film has no editing, no acting and no decor. But the rhythm of the movement of time is there within the frame, as the sole organising force of the—quite complex—dramatic development.

No one component of a film can have any meaning in isolation: *it is the film that is the work of art.* And we can only talk about its components rather arbitrarily, dividing it up artificially for the sake of theoretical discussion.

Nor can I accept the notion that editing is the main formative element of a film, as the protagonists of 'montage cinema', following Kuleshov and Eisenstcin, maintained in the 'twenties, as if a film was made on the editing table.

It has often been pointed out, quite rightly, that every art form involves editing, in the sense of selection and collation, adjusting parts and pieces. The cinema image comes into being during shooting, and exists *within* the frame. During shooting, therefore, I concentrate on the course of time in the frame, in order to reproduce it and record it. Editing brings together shots which are already filled with time, and organises the unified, living structure inherent in the film; and the time that pulsates through the blood vessels of the film, making it alive, is of varying rhythmic pressure.

The idea of 'montage cinema'—that editing brings together two concepts and thus engenders a new, third one—again seems to me to be incompatible with the nature of cinema. Art can never have the interplay of concepts as its ultimate goal. The image is tied to the

concrete and the material, yet reaches out along mysterious paths to regions beyond the spirit—perhaps that is what Pushkin meant when he said that 'Poetry has to be a little bit stupid.'

The poetics of cinema, a mixture of the basest material substances such as we tread every day, is resistant to symbolism. A single frame is enough to show, from his choice and recording of matter, whether a director is talented, whether he is endowed with cinematic vision.

Editing is ultimately no more than the ideal variant of the assembly of the shots, necessarily contained within the material that has been put onto the roll of film. Editing a picture correctly, competently, means allowing the separate scenes and shots to come together spontaneously, for in a sense they edit themselves; they join up according to their own intrinsic pattern. It is simply a question of recognising and following this pattern while joining and cutting. It is not always easy to sense the pattern of relationships, the articulations between the shots; moreover, if the scene has been shot inexactly, you will have not merely to join the pieces logically and naturally at the editing table, but laboriously to seek out the basic principle of the articulations. Little by little, however, you will slowly find emerging and becoming clearer the essential unity contained within the material.

In a curious, retroactive process, a self-organising structure takes shape during editing because of the distinctive properties given the material during shooting. The essential nature of the filmed material comes out in the character of the editing.

To refer again to my own experience, I must say that a prodigious amount of work went into editing *Mirror.* There were some twenty or more variants. I don't just mean changes in the order of certain shots, but major alterations in the actual structure, in the sequence of the episodes. At moments it looked as if the film could not be edited, which would have meant that inadmissible lapses had occurred during shooting. The film didn't hold together, it wouldn't stand up, it fell apart as one watched, it had no unity, no necessary inner connection, no logic. And then, one fine day, when we somehow managed to devise one last, desperate rearrangement—there was the film. The material came to life; the parts started to function reciprocally, as if linked by a bloodstream; and as that last, despairing attempt was projected onto the screen, the film was born before our very eyes. For a long time I still couldn't believe the miracle—the film held together.

It was a serious test of how good our shooting had been. It was clear that the parts came together because of a propensity inherent in the material, which must have originated during filming; and if we were not deceiving ourselves about its being there despite all our difficulties, then the picture could not but come together, it was in the very nature of things. It had to happen, legitimately and spontaneously, once we recognised the meaning and the life principle of the shots. And when that happened, thank God!—what a relief it was for everyone.

Time itself, running through the shots, had met and linked together.

There are about two hundred shots in *Mirror,* very few when a film of that length usually has between five hundred and a thousand; the small number is due to their length.

Although the assembly of the shots is responsible for the structure of a film, it does not, as is generally assumed, create its rhythm.

The distinctive time running through the shots makes the rhythm of the picture; and rhythm is determined not by the length of the edited pieces, but by the pressure of the time that runs through them. Editing cannot determine rhythm (in this respect it can only be a feature of style); indeed, time courses through the picture despite editing rather than because of it. The course of time, recorded in the frame, is what the director has to catch in the pieces laid out on the editing table.

Time, imprinted in the frame, dictates the particular editing principle; and the pieces that 'won't edit'—that can't be properly joined—are those which record a radically different kind of time. One cannot, for instance, put actual time together with conceptual time, any more than one can join water pipes of different diameter. The consistency of the time that runs through the shot, its intensity or 'sloppiness', could be called time-pressure: then editing can be seen as the assembly of the pieces on the basis of the time-pressure within them.

Maintaining the operative pressure, or thrust, will unify the impact of the different shots.

How does time make itself felt in a shot? It becomes tangible when you sense something significant, truthful, going on beyond the events on the screen; when you realise, quite consciously, that what you see in the frame is not limited to its visual depiction, but is a pointer to something stretching out beyond the frame and to infinity;

a pointer to life. Like the infinity of the image which we talked of earlier, a film is bigger than it is—at least, if it is a real film. And it always turns out to have more thought, more ideas, than were consciously put there by its author. Just as life, constantly moving and changing, allows everyone to interpret and feel each separate moment in his own way, so too a real picture, faithfully recording on film the time which flows on beyond the edges of the frame, lives within time if time lives within it; this two-way process is a determining factor of cinema.

The film then becomes something beyond its ostensible existence as an exposed and edited roll of film, a story, a plot. Once in contact with the individual who sees it, it separates from its author, starts to live its own life, undergoes changes of form and meaning.

I reject the principles of 'montage cinema' because they do not allow the film to continue beyond the edges of the screen: they do not allow the audience to bring personal experience to bear on what is in front of them on film. 'Montage cinema' presents the audience with puzzles and riddles, makes them decipher symbols, wonder at allegories, appealing all the time to their intellectual experience. Each of these riddles, however, has its own word-for-word solution; so I feel that Eisenstein prevents the audience from letting their feelings be influenced by their own reaction to what they see. When in *October* he juxtaposes a balalaika with Kerensky, his method has become his aim, in the way that Valery meant. The construction of the image becomes an end in itself, and the author proceeds to make a total onslaught on the audience, imposing upon them his own attitude to what is happening.

If one compares cinema with such time-based arts as, say, ballet or music, cinema stands out as giving time visible, real form. Once recorded on film, the phenomenon is there, given and immutable, even when the time is intensely subjective.

Artists are divided into those who create their own inner world, and those who recreate reality. I undoubtedly belong to the first—but that actually alters nothing: my inner world may be of interest to some, others will be left cold or even irritated by it; the point is that the inner world created by cinematic means always has to be taken as reality, as it were objectively established in the immediacy of the recorded moment.

A piece of music can be played in different ways, and can therefore last for varying lengths of time. Here time is simply a

condition of certain causes and effects set out in a given order; it has an abstract, philosophical character. Cinema on the other hand is able to record time in outward and visible signs, recognisable to the feelings. And so time becomes the very foundation of cinema: as sound is in music, colour in painting, character in drama.

Rhythm, then, is not the metrical sequence of pieces; what makes it is the time-thrust within the frames. And I am convinced that it is rhythm, and not editing, as people tend to think, that is the main formative element of cinema.

Editing exists in every art form, since material always has to be selected and joined. What is different about cinema editing is that it brings together time, imprinted in the segments of film. Editing entails assembling smaller and larger pieces, each of which carries a different time. And their assembly creates a new awareness of the existence of that time, emerging as a result of the intervals, of what is cut out, carved off in the process; but the distinctive character of the assembly, as we said earlier, is already present in the segments. Editing does not engender, or recreate, a new quality; it brings out a quality already inherent in the frames that it joins. Editing is anticipated during shooting; it is presupposed in the character of what is filmed, programmed by it from the outset. Editing has to do with stretches of time, and the degree of intensity with which these exist, as recorded by the camera; not with abstract symbols, picturesque physical realia, carefully arranged compositions judiciously dotted about the scene; not with two similar concepts, which in conjunction produce—we are told—a 'third meaning'; but with the diversity of life perceived.

Eisenstein's own work vindicates my thesis. If his intuition let him down, and he failed to put into the edited pieces the time-pressure required by that particular assembly, then the rhythm, which he held to be directly dependent on editing, would show up the weakness of his theoretical premise. Take for example the battle on the ice in *Alexander Nevsky.* Ignoring the need to fill the frames with the appropriate time-pressure, he tries to achieve the inner dynamic of the battle with an edited sequence of short—sometimes excessively short—shots. However, despite the lightning speed with which the frames change, the audience (at any rate those among them who come with an open mind, who have not had it dinned into them that this is a 'classical' film, and a 'classical' example of editing as taught at S.I.C.) are dogged by the feeling that what is happening

on the screen is sluggish and unnatural. This is because no time-truth exists in the separate frames. In themselves they are static and insipid. And so there is an inevitable contradiction between the frame itself, devoid of specific time-process, and the precipitate style of editing, which is arbitrary and superficial because it bears no relation to any time within the shots. The sensation the director was counting on never reaches the audience, because he didn't bother to fill the frame with the authentic time-sense of the legendary battle. The event is not recreated, but put together any old how.

Rhythm in cinema is conveyed by the life of the object visibly recorded in the frame. Just as from the quivering of a reed you can tell what sort of current, what pressure there is in a river, in the same way we know the movement of time from the flow of the life-process reproduced in the shot.

It is above all through sense of time, through rhythm, that the director reveals his individuality. Rhythm colours a work with stylistic marks. It is not thought up, not composed on an arbitrary, theoretical basis, but comes into being spontaneously in a film, in response to the director's innate awareness of life, his 'search for time'. It seems to me that time in a shot has to flow independently and with dignity, then ideas will find their place in it without fuss, bustle, haste. Feeling the rhythmicality of a shot is rather like feeling a truthful word in literature. An inexact word in writing, like an inexact rhythm in film, destroys the veracity of the work. (Of course the concept of rhythm can be applied to prose—though in quite another way.)

But here we have an inevitable problem. Let us say that I want to have time flowing through the frame with dignity, independently, so that no-one in the audience will feel that his perception is being coerced, so that he may, as it were, allow himself to be taken prisoner voluntarily by the artist, as he starts to recognise the material of the film as his own, assimilating it, drawing it in to himself as new, intimate experience. But there is still an apparent dichotomy: for the director's sense of time always amounts to a kind of coercion of the audience, as does his imposition of his inner world. The person watching either falls into your rhythm (your world), and becomes your ally, or else he does not, in which case no contact is made. And so some people become your 'own', and others remain strangers; and I think this is not only perfectly natural, but, alas, inevitable.

I see it as my professional task then, to create my own, distinctive

flow of time, and convey in the shot a sense of its movement—from lazy and soporific to stormy and swift—and to one person it will seem one way, to another, another.

Assembly, editing, disturbs the passage of time, interrupts it and simultaneously gives it something new. The distortion of time can be a means of giving it rhythmical expression.

Sculpting in time!

But the deliberate joining of shots of uneven time-pressure must not be introduced casually; it has to come from inner necessity, from an organic process going on in the material as a whole. The minute the organic process of the transitions is disturbed, the emphasis of the editing (which the director wants to hide) starts to obtrude; it is laid bare, it leaps to the eye. If time is slowed down or speeded up artificially, and not in response to an endogenous development, if the change of rhythm is wrong, the result will be false and strident.

Joining segments of unequal time-value necessarily breaks the rhythm. However, if this break is promoted by forces at work within the assembled frames, then it may be an essential factor in the carving out of the right rhythmic design. To take the various time-pressures, which we could designate metaphorically as brook, spate, river, waterfall, ocean — joining them together engenders that unique rhythmic design which is the author's sense of time, called into being as a newly formed entity.

In so far as sense of time is germane to the director's innate perception of life, and editing is dictated by the rhythmic pressures in the segments of film, his handwriting is to be seen in his editing. It expresses his attitude to the conception of the film, and is the ultimate embodiment of his philosophy of life. I think that the film-maker who edits his films easily and in different ways is bound to be superficial. You will aways recognise the editing of Bergman, Bresson, Kurosawa or Antonioni; none of them could ever be confused with anyone else, because each one's perception of time, as expressed in the rhythm of his films, is always the same. On the other hand, if you take a few Hollywood films, you feel they were all edited by the same person; in terms of editing they are quite indistinguishable.

Of course you have to know the rules of editing, just as you have to know all the other rules of your profession; but artistic creation begins at the point where these rules are bent or broken. Because Lev Tolstoy was not an impeccable stylist like Bunin,'[9] and his novels

Mirror *Margarita Terekhova: Arseniy Tarkovsky's poem,*
SUTRA YA TEBYA . . . — *FROM MORNING ON* . .

From morning on I waited yesterday,
They knew you wouldn't come, they guessed.
You remember what a lovely day it was?
A *holiday! I didn't need a coat.*

You came today, and it turned out
A sullen, leaden day,
And it was raining, and somehow late,
And branches cold with running drops.

Word cannot soothe, nor kerchief wipe away.

Arseniy Tarkovsky
(Translated by Kitty Hunter-Blair)

lack the elegance and perfection which mark many of Bunin's stories, Bunin cannot be declared greater than Tolstoy. You not only forgive Tolstoy his ponderous and often unnecessary moralising and his clumsy sentences, you even begin to be fond of them as a trait, a feature of the man. Faced with a really great figure, you accept him with all his 'weaknesses', which become the distinguishing marks of his aesthetic.

If you extract Dostoievsky's descriptions of his characters from the context of his work you cannot but find them disconcerting: 'beautiful', 'with bright lips', 'pale faces', and so on and so forth . . . But that simply doesn't matter, because we're talking not of a professional and a craftsman, but of an artist and a philosopher. Bunin, who had an infinite regard for Tolstoy, thought *Anna Karenina* abominably written, and, as we know, tried to rewrite it—with no success.

The same applies to editing: it is not a question of mastering the technique like a virtuoso, but of a vital need for your own, distinct individual expression. Above all you have to know what brought you into cinema rather than into some other branch of art, and what you want to say by means of its poetics. Incidentally, in recent years one has met more and more young people coming into cinema schools already prepared to do 'what you have to'—in the Soviet Union, or what pays best—in the West. This is tragic. Problems of technique are child's play; you can learn any of it. But thinking independently, worthily, is not like learning to do something; nor is being an individual. Nobody can be forced to shoulder a weight that is not merely difficult, but at times impossible to bear; but there is no other way, it has to be all or nothing.

The man who has stolen in order never to thieve again remains a thief. Nobody who has ever betrayed his principles can have a pure relationship with life. Therefore when a film-maker says he will produce a pot-boiler in order to give himself the strength and the means to make the film of his dreams—that is so much deception, or worse, self-deception. He will never now make *his* film.

Scenario and shooting script

Between the first and last stages of making a film, the director comes up against such a vast number of people and such divergent problems—some of them all but insuperable—that it almost seems as if circumstances have been deliberately calculated to make him forget why it was that he started working on the picture.

I have to say that for me the difficulties connected specifically with the conception of a film have little to do with its initial inspiration; the problem has always been to keep it intact and unadulterated as the stimulus for work and as a symbol of the finished picture. There is always a danger of the original conception degenerating in the turmoil of producing the film, of being deformed and destroyed in the process of its own realisation.

The film's progress from its conception to its eventual printing is fraught with every kind of hazard. These have to do not only with technical problems, but also with the enormous number of people involved in the process of production.

If the director fails to put across to the actor how he sees a character and how that character has to be interpreted, then his conception will immediately begin to keel over. If the camera-man has understood his task anything less than perfectly, then the picture, however brilliantly it may have been filmed in visual and formal terms, will no longer revolve around the axle of its own idea, and in the end it will lack cohesion.

You can build superb sets that are the pride of the designer, but if they are not inspired by the director's original idea, then they can only be a hindrance to the film. If the composer is not under the director's control and writes music inspired by ideas of his own, then however marvellous the result, unless it is what the film needs, then again the conception is in danger of not being realised.

It is no exaggeration to say that at every turn the director is beset by the danger of becoming a mere witness, observing the scriptwriter writing, the designer making sets, the actor playing and the editor cutting. That is in fact what happens in highly commercialised productions: the director's task is merely to coordinate the professional functions of the various members of the team. In a word, it is terribly difficult to insist on an *author's* film, when all your

efforts are concentrated on not letting the idea be 'spilt' until nothing is left of it as you contend with the normal working conditions of film-making. One can only hope for a satisfactory outcome if the original conception remains fresh and vivid.

I should say at once that I do not look on scenario as a literary genre. Indeed, the more cinematic a script, the less can it claim literary status in its own right, in the way that a play so often can. And we know that in practice no screenplay has ever been on the level of literature.

I do not understand why anyone with literary talent should ever want to be a script writer—apart, obviously, from mercenary reasons. A writer has to write, and someone who thinks in cinematic images should take up directing. For the idea and purpose of a film, and their realisation, have finally to be the responsibility of the director-author; otherwise he cannot have effective control of the shooting.

Of course a director can, and indeed often does, turn to a writer who happens to be a kindred spirit. The latter, in his capacity as script writer, then becomes a co-author; the literary basis of the film is worked out with his collaboration; but in that case he must share the director's conception, be prepared to be guided by it in every instance, and be capable of working creatively to develop and enhance it as may be required.

If a scenario is a brilliant piece of literature, then it is far better that it should remain as prose. If a director still wants to make a film from it, then the first thing to be done is to turn it into a screenplay which can be a valid basis for his work. At that point it will be a new script, in which literary images have been replaced by filmic equivalents.

If the scenario sets out to be a detailed plan of the film, if it includes only what is going to be filmed and how this is to be done, then what we have is a kind of prescient transcript of the finished film, which has nothing to do with literature. Once the original version has been modified in the course of shooting (as almost always happens with my pictures) and has lost its structure, then it will be of interest only to the specialist concerned with the history of a particular film. These constantly changing versions may appeal to those who wish to explore the nature of the film-maker's art, but cannot be called literature.

A scenario with literary qualities is only useful as a way of persuading those on whom a production depends of the viability of a

Mirror
Little Andrey in his father's house

projected film. Not that a screenplay itself is any guarantee of the quality of the finished work: we know dozens of examples of bad films made from 'good' scenarios and vice versa. And it is no secret that the real work on a scenario doesn't start until after it has been accepted and bought; and that this work will involve the director himself in writing, or working in close collaboration with his literary colleagues, channelling their skills in the direction he requires. I am of course talking of what are known as *auteur* films.

In the process of developing a script I used always to try to have an exact picture of the film in my mind, even down to the sets. Now, however, I am more inclined to work out a scene or shot only in a very general way, so that it will emerge spontaneously during shooting. For the life on location, the atmosphere of the set, the actor's moods, can prompt one to new, startling and unexpected strategies. Imagination is less rich than life. And these days I feel more and more strongly that ideas and moods should not be all

predetermined in advance. One should be able to depend on the feeling of the scene, and approach the set with one's mind open. There was a time when I could not start shooting without having devised a complete plan of the episode, but now I find that such a plan is abstract, and that it restricts the imagination. Perhaps there is something to be said for dismissing it from one's mind for the time being.

You remember in Proust—

> 'The steeples seemed so far away, and we appeared to be making so little progress towards them, that I was amazed when, a few minutes later, we stopped in front of Martinvillc church. I did not know the cause of the pleasure I had felt from seeing them on the horizon, and it struck me as very laborious to have to try and discover that cause; I wanted those lines, stirring in the sunlight, to be stored away in my head, not to have to think about them any more. . . .
>
> 'Without actually telling myself that what was hidden behind the steeples of Martinville must bear some relation to a fine sentence, since it had come to me in the form of pleasurable words, I asked the doctor for pencil and paper, and, despite the jolting of the buggy, in order to ease my conscience and obey my own enthusiasm, I composed the following fragment. . . .
>
> 'I never thought about the page subsequently, but at the moment when I finished writing it, there in the corner of the box where the doctor's coachman usually put the chickens he had bought in Martinville market, I felt so happy, so freed by it from those steeples and from what was hidden behind them, that, as if 1 myself were a hen who had just laid an egg, I started to sing at the top of my voice'

I went through exactly similar emotions when I finished making *Mirror.* Childhood memories which for years had given me no peace suddenly vanished, as if they had melted away, and at last I stopped dreaming about the house where 1 had lived so many years before.

Several years before making the film I had decided simply to put on paper the memories that plagued me; at that point I had no thought of a film. It was to be a novella about the war-time evacuation, and the plot was to be centred on the military instructor at my school. Then I found that the subject was too slight to develop into a novella, and I never wrote it. But the incident, which had made a deep impression on me as a child, continued to torment me, and lived on in my memory until it had become a minor episode of the film.

When I finished the first version of the *Mirror* script, originally entitled *A White, White Day,* I realised that cinematically the conception was very far from clear; a simple piece of recollection, full of elegiac sadness and nostalgia for my childhood, was not what I wanted. It was obvious that something was missing from the script, and that what was missing was crucial. Even when the script was first being considered, therefore, the soul of the film had not yet come to dwell in the body. I was acutely conscious of the need to find a key idea, that would raise it above the level of lyrical memoir.

Then a second version of the script was written: I wanted to intersperse the childhood episodes of the novella with fragments of straight interview with my mother, thus juxtaposing two comparative perceptions of the past (mother's and narrator's) which would take shape for the audience in the interaction of two different projections of that past in the memories of two people very close to each other but of different generations. I still think that way could have led us to interesting, unpredictable results.

However, I do not regret now that I subsequently also had to abandon that structure, which would still have been too direct and unsubtle, and replace all the proposed interviews with the mother with acted scenes. I never really felt that the acting and documentary elements came together dynamically. They clashed, and contradicted each other, and putting them together would have been a formalistic, intellectual exercise in editing: a spurious unity founded on concepts. The two elements carried quite different concentrations of material, different times and time-pressures: on the one hand the real, documentary, exact time of the interviews, and on the other the narrator's time in the memories, recreated through acting. And the whole thing was somehow reminiscent of Cinéma-Vérité and that was not at all what I wanted.

The transitions between fictional, subjective time and authentic documentary time suddenly struck me as unconvincing—artificial and monotonous, like a game of ping-pong.

My decision not to edit a picture filmed on two different time planes does not mean at all that acted and documentary material can never, by definition, be combined. Indeed, I think that in *Mirror* the newsreel and the acted scenes come together perfectly naturally; so

much so that I have more than once heard people say that they thought the newsreels were reconstructions, deliberately made to give the impression of actual newsreels: the documentary had become an organic part of the film.

This result was due to my having found some outstanding material. I had to look through thousands of metres of film before hitting on the sequence of the Soviet Army crossing Lake Sivash; and it stunned me. I had never come across anything like it. As a rule one was faced with poor quality films, or short snippets recording day to day life in the army, or else show pieces, which smacked too much of planning and very little of the truth. I was beginning to despair of being able to draw this hotchpotch together in a single time-sense, when suddenly—quite unheard of for a newsreel—here was a record of one of the most dramatic moments in the history of the Soviet advance of 1943. It was a unique piece; I could hardly believe that such an enormous footage of film should have been spent on recording one single event continuously observed. It had clearly been filmed by an outstandingly gifted camera-man. When, on the screen before me, there appeared, as if coming out of nothing, these people shattered by the fearful, inhuman effort of that tragic moment of history, I knew that this episode had to become the centre, the very essence, heart, nerve of this picture that had started off merely as my intimate lyrical memories.

There came onto the screen an image of overwhelming dramatic force—and it was mine, specifically my own, as if the burden and the pain had been borne by me. (Incidentally, it was precisely this episode that the chief of State Cinema, Yermash, wanted me to take out of the film.) The scene was about that suffering which is the price of what is known as historical progress, and of the innumerable victims whom, from time immemorial, it has claimed. It was impossible to believe for a moment that such suffering was senseless. The images spoke of immortality, and Arseniy Tarkovksy's poems were the consummation of the episode because they gave voice to its ultimate meaning. The newsreel had aesthetic qualities that built up to an extraordinary pitch of emotional intensity. Once imprinted on the film, the truth recorded in this accurate chronicle ceased to be simply like life. It suddenly became an *image* of heroic sacrifice and the price of that sacrifice; the image of a historical turning point brought about at incalculable cost.

The film affected you with a piercing, aching poignancy, because in the shots were simply people. People dragging themselves, knee deep in wet mud, through an endless swamp that stretched out beyond the horizon, beneath a whitish, flat sky. Hardly anyone survived. The boundless perspective of these recorded moments created an effect close to catharsis. Later I learned that the army camera-man who had made the film, with such extraordinary penetration into the events taking place around him, had been killed on that same day.

When we had only four hundred metres of film to go on *Mirror*, in other words some thirteen minutes of screen time, the film still did not exist. The narrator's childhood dreams had been decided and filmed, but even these did not give the film a unified structure.

The film in its present form only came into existence with the introduction of the narrator's wife into the fabric of the narrative; she had not figured either in the original plan or in the script.

We very much liked Margarita Terekhova as the mother, but felt all the time that the role allotted her in the original script was not sufficient to bring out, or make use of, her tremendous potential. Then we decided to write some additional episodes, and she was given the role of the wife. After that we had the idea of interspersing the episodes of the author's past and present in the editing.

To begin with, my brilliant co-author—Alexander Misharin—and I intended to bring into the new dialogue a statement of our views on the aesthetic and moral basis of artistic work; mercifully, however, we thought better of it. I trust that some of these reflections do in fact now run imperceptibly through the whole film.

This account of the making of *Mirror* illustrates that for me scenario is a fragile, living, ever-changing structure, and that a film is only made at the moment when work on it is finally completed. The script is the base from which one starts to explore; and for the entire time that I am working on a film I have the constant anxiety that perhaps nothing may come of it.

Mirror offers an obvious example of how some of my working principles regarding scenario were carried to their logical conclusion. A great deal was finally thought out, formulated, built up, only in the course of shooting. The scripts of my earlier films were more clearly structured. When we started work on *Mirror* we made it a deliberate point of principle not to have the picture worked out and arranged in advance, before the material had been filmed. It was

important to see how, under what conditions, the film could take shape as it were by itself: depending on the takes, on contact with the actors; through the construction of sets, and in the way it adapted to the places chosen for location.

We drew up no prescriptive plans for scenes or episodes as complete visual entities; what we worked on was clear sense of atmosphere and empathy with the characters, which demanded, then and there on the set, exact plastic realisation. If I 'see' anything at all before shooting, if I envisage anything, then it is the inner state, the distinctive inner tension of the scenes to be filmed, and the psychology of the characters. But I still do not know the precise mould in which it will all be cast. I go on to the set in order to understand by what means that state can be expressed on film. And once I have understood that, I start shooting.

Mirror is also the story of the old house where the narrator spent his childhood, the farmstead where he was born and where his father and mother lived. This building, which over the years had fallen into ruins, was reconstructed, 'resurrected' from photographs just as it had been, and on the foundations which had survived. And so it stood exactly as it had forty years earlier. When we subsequently took my mother there, whose youth had been spent in that place and that house, her reaction to seeing it surpassed my boldest expectations. What she experienced was a return to her past; and then I knew we were moving in the right direction. The house awoke in her the feelings which the film was intended to express . . .

A field lay in front of the house; I remember buckwheat growing between the house and the road leading to the next village. It is very pretty when it is in blossom. The white flowers, which give the effect of a snow-covered field, have stayed in my memory as one of the distinctive and essential details of my childhood. But when we arrived to decide where we would shoot, there was no buckwheat in sight—for years the *kolkhoz* had been sowing the field with clover and oats. When we asked them to sow it for us with buckwheat, they made a great point of assuring us that buckwheat wouldn't grow there, because it was quite the wrong soil. Despite that, we rented the field and sowed it with buckwheat at our own risk. The people in the *kolkhoz* couldn't conceal their amazement when they saw it come up. And we took that success as a good omen. It seemed to tell us something about the special quality of our memory—about its capacity for penetrating beyond the veils drawn by time, and this was

Mirror
Leafing through an old art book and finding Leonardo's drawings.

exactly what the film had to be about: it was its seminal idea.

I do not know what would have happened to the picture if the buckwheat had not grown . . . I shall never forget the moment it started to flower.

As I began work on *Mirror* I found myself reflecting more and more that if you are serious about your work, then a film is not merely the next item in your career, it is an action which will affect the whole of your life. For I had made up my mind that in this film, for the first time, I would use the means of cinema to talk of all that was most precious to me, and do so directly, without playing any kind of tricks.

I had the greatest difficulty in explaining to people that there is no hidden, coded meaning in the film, nothing beyond the desire to tell the truth. Often my assurances provoked incredulity and even disappointment. Some people evidently wanted more: they needed arcane symbols, secret meanings. They were not accustomed to the poetics of the cinema image. And I was disappointed in my turn. Such was the reaction of the opposition party in the audience; as for my own colleagues, they launched a bitter attack on me, accusing me of immodesty, of wanting to make a film about myself.

In the end we were saved by one thing only—faith: the belief that since our work was so important to us it could not but become equally important to the audience. The film aimed at reconstructing the lives of people whom I loved dearly and knew well. I wanted to

tell the story of the pain suffered by one man because he feels he cannot repay his family for all they have given him. He feels he hasn't loved them enough, and this idea torments him and will not let him be.

Once you start to speak of things that are precious, you are immediately anxious about how people will react to what you have said, and you want to protect these things, to defend them against incomprehension. We were worried about how future audiences would receive the picture, but at the same time we went on believing, with maniac obstinacy, that we would be heard. Our decision was vindicated by later developments; in this respect the letters quoted at the beginning of the book explain something of what happened. I could not have hoped for a higher level of understanding, and such an audience reaction was supremely important to me for my future work.

Mirror was not an attempt to talk about myself, not at all. It was about my feelings towards people dear to me; about my relationship with them; my perpetual pity for them and my own inadequacy—my feeling of duty left unfufilled.

The episodes the narrator remembers at an extreme moment of crisis cause him pain up to the last minute, fill him with sorrow and anxiety . . .

When you read a play you can see what it means, even though it may be interpreted differently in different productions; it has its identity from the outset, whereas the identity of a film cannot be discerned from the scenario. The scenario dies in the film. Cinema may take dialogue from literature, but that is all—it bears no essential relation to literature whatsoever. A play becomes part of literature, because the ideas and characters expressed in dialogue constitute its essence: and dialogue is always literary. But in cinema dialogue is merely one of the components of the material fabric of the film. Anything in the scenario that has aspirations to literature, to prose, must as a matter of principle be consistently assimilated and adapted in the course of making the film. The literary element in a film is *smelted;* it ceases to be literature once the film has been made. Once the work is done, all that is left is the written transcript, the shooting script, which could not be called literature by any definition. It is more like an account of something seen related to a blind man.

The film's graphic realisation

It is supremely important, and at the same time very hard, to make set designer and camera-man (and for that matter all the others working on the film) into partners, collaborators in your plan. It is essential that they should not be in any way mere functionaries; they have to participate as creative artists in their own right, and be allowed to share in all your feelings and thoughts. Making of the camera-man an ally and kindred spirit, however, can involve some diplomacy, even to the point of concealing one's conception, one's ultimate aim, in order that it may achieve its optimum realisation in the camera-man's treatment. On occasion I have even concealed the idea of a film altogether in order to make the camera-man handle it the right way.

What happened between Yusov and myself illustrates what I mean. He was the cameraman responsible for all my films up to and including *Solaris.* When he read the script of *Mirror,* Yusov refused to shoot it. He said he found the frankly autobiographical nature of the work distasteful from an ethical point of view; he was embarrassed and irritated by the unduly personal, lyrical tone of the whole narrative, and by the author's desire to talk exclusively about himself (as I mentioned earlier, such, too, was the reaction of my colleagues). Yusov of course was honest and truthful; he evidently genuinely felt that I was being less than modest. It is true that afterwards, when the film had been shot by Georgi Rerberg, he once admitted to me, 'I hate to have to say it, Andrey, but it is your best film.' That remark too, I hope, was totally candid.

Knowing Vadim Yusov as well as I did, I should perhaps have been more cunning; instead of letting him into all my ideas from the start, I should have given him the script in little bits... I don't know . . . I'm no good at pretence, and I can't start playing the diplomatist with my friends.

Anyhow, in all the films I have made up till now I have always looked on the camera-man as a co-author. In itself close contact between the people working on a picture is not enough. The kind of subterfuge I have just mentioned really is needed, but, to be frank, I have always reached the conclusion post-factum, entirely theoretically. In practice I have never had any secrets from my colleagues: on

the contrary, throughout shooting the team have always worked as one man. Because until we are linked up, as it were, by our very veins and nerves, until our blood starts to circulate around the same system, it is simply not possible to make a real film.

All the time we were making *Mirror* we spent every possible moment together; we would talk about what each of us knew and loved, about things we held dear and things we hated; and we used to lose ourselves in thoughts about our film. Nor did it matter in the least what place the work of this or that member of the group had in the film. For instance Edward Artemiev composed only a few fragments of music for it, but he is just as important in his own right as all the others, because without the participation of each of them the film could not have been made as it was.

When the set had been built up on the foundations of the ruined house, we all, as members of the team, used to go there in the early morning, to wait for the dawn, to experience for ourselves what was special about the place, to study it in different weather conditions, to see it at different times of the day; we wanted to immerse ourselves in the sensations of the people who had once lived in that house, and had watched the same sunrises and sunsets, the same rains and mists, some forty years previously. We all infected each other with our mood of recollection, and our feeling that the communion between us was sacred. And the completion of work came as a painful wrench, as if that was the moment at which we should have been starting on it: by that time we had almost become part of one another.

The spirit of harmony in the team turned out to be so important that at moments of crisis—and there were several—when the camera-man and I ceased to understand each other, I was utterly lost. Everything fell out of my hands and for several days we were in no state to go on shooting. Only when we found a means of communicating again was equilibrium restored, and we resumed filming. In other words, the creative process was controlled not by discipline and schedule, but by the psychological climate prevailing in the team. Moreover, we finished shooting ahead of time.

Film-making, like any other artistic authorship, has to be subject first and foremost to inner demands, not to the outward demands of discipline and production, which, if too much store is set by them, only destroy the working rhythrm. It is possible to move mountains when the people working together to realise the conception of the film, all with their different characters, temperaments, ages and

Mirror
Portrait of a Young Woman with a Juniper Twig (Ginevra Benci, probably by Leonardo).

life-histories, are united as one family and fired by a single passion. If a genuinely creative atmosphere can be built up in the team, then it ceases to matter who is responsible for any one idea: who thought of that way of doing a close-up, or panorama, who first devised a lighting contrast or camera-angle.

And then it is not possible to say whose function is the most important—that of camera-man or director; the scene becomes a living structure, in which there is nothing forced and no hint of self-admiration.

In the case of *Mirror,* you can imagine how sensitive all the members of the team had to be in order to accept as their own an idea that not only came from someone else, but was deeply private; and how hard it was, frankly, for me to share it with my colleagues, perhaps even harder than with the audience—after all, right up to the time of the premiere, an audience remains a kind of remote abstraction.

Many barriers had to be overcome before we reached the point at which my colleagues really took on my idea as their own. On the other hand, once *Mirror* was finished, it was no longer possible to think of it as just the story of my family, for a whole diverse group of people had now taken part in it. It was as if my family had grown.

With such perfect cooperation between the members of the

group, purely technical problems somehow fall away. Camera-man and set designer were doing not merely what they knew how to do, what was asked of them, but in every new situation they pushed out the boundaries of their professional capacities a little further. There was no question of confining themselves to what 'could' be done, but of doing whatever was needed. It involved far more than the accepted professional approach, when the camera-man selects from the director's proposals only what he is technically able to execute.

What has to be achieved is that degree of authenticity and truthfulness that will leave the audience convinced that within the walls of that set there live human souls.

One of the greatest difficulties in the graphic realisation of a film is, of course, colour. Paradoxically, it constitutes a major obstacle to the creation on screen of a genuine sense of truth. At present colour is less a question of aesthetics than of commercial necessity; and it is significant that more and more black and white films are now being made.

The perception of colour is a physiological and psychological phenomenon to which, as a rule, nobody pays particular attention. The picturesque character of a shot, due often enough simply to the quality of the film, is one more artificial element loaded onto the image, and something has to be done to counteract it if you mind about being faithful to life. You have to try to neutralise colour, to modify its impact on the audience. If colour becomes the dominant dramatic element of the shot, it means that the director and camera-man are using a painter's methods to affect the audience. That is why nowadays one very often finds that the average expertly made film will have the same sort of appeal as the luxuriously illustrated glossy magazine; the colour photography will be warring against the expressiveness of the image.

Perhaps the effect of colour should be neutralised by alternating colour and monochrome sequences, so that the impression made by the complete spectrum is spaced out, toned down. Why is it, when all that the camera is doing is recording real life on film, that a coloured shot should seem so unbelievably, monstrously false? The explanation must surely be that colour, reproduced mechanically, lacks the touch of the artist's hand; in this area he loses his organising function, and has no means of selecting what he wants. The film's chromatic partitura, with its own developmental pattern, is absent, taken away from the director by the technological process. It also becomes impossible for him to select and reappraise the colour elements in the world around him. Strangely enough, even though the world is coloured, the black and white image comes closer to the psychological, naturalistic truth of art, based as it is on special properties of seeing as well as of hearing.

The film actor

When I make a film, it is ultimately I who answer for everything, including the actors' performances. In theatre the responsibility of the actor for his achievements and failures is immeasurably greater.

It can sometimes be a grave drawback for the actor to know the director's plan too well at the start of shooting. It is for the director to build up the role, thus giving the actor total freedom in each separate section—a freedom that cannot happen in theatre. If the film actor constructs his own role, he loses the opportunity for spontaneous and involuntary playing within the terms laid down by the plan and purpose of the film. The director has to induce the right state of mind in him, and then make sure that it is constantly sustained. And the actor can be brought to the right state of mind by various means—it depends upon the circumstances of the set, and on the personality of the actor with whom you are working. The latter has to be in a psychological state that is impossible to feign. No one who is downhearted can hide the fact completely—and what cinema demands is the truth of a state of mind that cannot be concealed.

Of course the functions can be shared: the director can compose a partitura of the characters' emotions and the actors express them—or rather, find themselves in them—in the course of shooting. But the actor cannot do both things at once on the set; in theatre, by contrast, he is obliged to do both as he works on his role.

In front of the camera the actor has to exist authentically and immediately, in the state defined by the dramatic circumstances. Then the director, once he has in his hands the sequences and segments and retakes of what actually occurred in front of the camera, will edit these in accordance with his own artistic objectives, constructing the inner logic of the action.

Cinema has none of the spell of direct contact between actor and auditorium which is so strong in theatre. And so cinema will never replace theatre. Cinema lives by its capacity to resurrect the same event on the screen time after time—by its very nature it is, so to speak, *nostalgic*. In theatre, on the other hand, the play lives, develops, builds up rapport . . . It's a different means of self-awareness for the creative spirit.

The cinema director is rather like a collector. His exhibits are his frames, which constitute life, recorded once and for all time in myriad well-loved details, pieces, fragments, of which the actor, the character, may or may not be a part . . .

In theatre, as Kleist once observed very profoundly, acting is like sculpting in snow. But the actor has the happiness of communicating with his audience in moments of inspiration. There is nothing more sublime than that unison of actor and audience as they create art together. The performance only exists as long as the actor is there as a creator, when he is present, when he is: physically and spiritually alive. No actor means no theatre.

Unlike the film actor, every theatre player has to construct his own role within himself, from beginning to end, under the guidance of the director. He has to draw up a kind of chart of his feelings, subject to the overall conception of the play. In cinema such introspective building-up of character can never be admissible; it is not for the actor to make decisions about the stress, pitch and tone of his interpretation, for he cannot know all the components which will go to make up the film. His task is to live!—and to trust the director.

The director selects for him moments of his existence that express the conception of the film most accurately. The actor must not put constraints on himself, he must not ignore his own incomparable, God-like freedom.

When I am making a film I try not to wear down the actors with discussion, and am adamant that the actor should not connect any piece he plays with the whole, sometimes not even to his own immediately preceding and following scenes. In the scene in *Mirror*, for instance, where the heroine is waiting for her husband, her children's father, sitting on the fence and taking puffs of a cigarette, I preferred Margarita Terekhova not to know the plot, not to know whether he would ever come back to her. The story was kept secret from her so that she would not react to it at some unconscious level of her mind, but would live through that moment exactly as my

mother, her prototype, had once lived through it, with no foreknowledge of how her life would turn out. There is no doubt that her behaviour in this scene would have been different had she known what her relationship with her husband was to be in the future; not merely different, but falsified by what she knew of the sequel. The feeling of being doomed could not but have coloured the actress's playing at that early stage of the story. At some point—quite without wanting to if it was against the director's wishes—she would have revealed some feeling of the futility of her wait, and we too should have felt it; whereas what we had to feel here was the singularity, the uniqueness of that one moment, not its connection with the rest of her life.

Often enough in film, the director takes upon his conscience things that go against the wishes of the actor. In theatre, by contrast, we have to be made aware in every scene of the ideas that go to build up a character—that is the only right and natural way. For in theatre, things are not done to order; theatre works through metaphor, rhythm and rhyme—through its poetry.

Here we wanted the actress to experience those minutes just as she would have in her own life, happily unaware of the scenario; she would presumably be hoping, losing hope, and then starting to hope again . . . Within the given framework of waiting for her husband, the actress had to live out her own *mysterious* fragment of life ignorant of where it might be leading.

The one thing the film actor has to do is express in particular circumstances a psychological state peculiar to him alone, and do so naturally, true to his own emotional and intellectual make-up, and in the form that is right only for him. I don't mind in the least how he does it, or what means he uses: I don't feel I have the right to dictate the form of expression his individual psychology is to take. For each of us experiences a given situation in his own way, which is entirely personal. Some people when they are depressed long to lay their souls bare, to open up; others want to be left alone with their unhappiness, to close in on themselves, to avoid all contact with others.

I have often seen actors copy the gestures and behaviour of their director. I noticed that Vassily Shukshin,[20] when he was deeply influenced by Sergey Gerasimov,[21] and Kuravlyov, when he was working with Shukshin, both mimicked their directors. I will never make an actor adopt my design of his role. I want him to have total

Mirror *Newsreel shot of the Red Army crossing Lake Sivash.*

Life, Life

I don't believe forebodings, nor do omens
Frighten me. I do not run from slander
Nor from poison. On earth there is no death.
All are immortal. All is immortal. No need
To be afraid of death at seventeen
Nor yet at seventy. Reality and light
Exist, but neither death nor darkness.
All of us are on the sea-shore now,
And I am one of those who haul the nets
When a shoal of immortality comes in.

Live in the house—and the house will stand.
I will call up any century,
Go into it and build myself a house.
That is why your children are beside me
And your wives, all seated at one table,
One table for great-grandfather and grandson.
The future is accomplished here and now,
And if I slightly raise my hand before you
You will be left with all five beams of light.
With shoulder blades like timber props
I held up every day that made the past,
With a surveyor's chain I measured time
And travelled through as if across the Urals.

3

I picked an age whose stature measured mine.
We headed south, made dust swirl on the steppe.
Tall weeds were rank; a grasshopper was playing,
Brushed horseshoes with his whiskers, prophesied
And told me like a monk that I would perish.
I took my fate and strapped it to my saddle;
And now I've reached the future I still stand
Upright in my stirrups like a boy.

I only need my immortality
For my blood to go on flowing from age to age.
I would readily pay with my life
For a safe place with constant warmth
Were it not that life's flying needle
Leads me on through the world like a thread.

Arseniy Tarkovsky
(Translated by Kitty Hunter-Blair)

freedom, once he has made it clear before shooting starts that he is completely bound by the film's conception.

Original, unique expressiveness—that is the essential attribute of the cinema actor, for nothing less can become infectious on the screen or express the truth.

For the actor to be brought to the required state of mind the director has to empathise with the character. There is no other way of finding the right note for the performance. You cannot, for instance, go into an unknown house and start shooting a rehearsed scene. It is an unfamiliar house, inhabited by strangers, and naturally enough it cannot help a character from a different world to express himself. The director's first, very specific task is to convey to the actor the whole truth of the state of mind that has to be achieved.

Naturally, different actors have to be approached in different ways. Terekhova didn't know the whole scenario and played her part in separate bits. When she first realised that I wasn't going to tell her the plot or explain her whole part, she was most disconcerted . . . But in that way the different pieces she acted (and which I subsequently put together like a mosaic to make up a single picture) were the result of her intuition. At first it was not easy for us to work together. She found it hard to believe that I could anticipate—as it were on her behalf—how her role was going to come together in the end; in other words, to trust me.

I have come across actors who right up to the end could not bring themselves to trust completely in my reading of their role; for some reason they kept straining to direct their own parts, taking them out of the context of the film. I regard that kind of actor as less than professional. My idea of the real screen actor is someone capable of accepting whatever rules of the game are put to him, easily and naturally, with no sign of strain; to remain spontaneous in his reactions to any improvised situation. I am not interested in working with any other kind of actor, for he will never play anything beyond more or less simplified commonplaces.

In this connection, what a brilliant actor the late Anatoliy Solonitsyn was, and how I miss him now. And Margarita Terekhova eventually understood what was being asked of her and played easily, freely, believing without reservation in the director's purpose. Such actors have a child-like trust in the director, and I find this capacity for trust extraordinarily inspiring.

Anatoliy Solonitsyn was a born film actor, highly strung and

suggestible. It was so easy to infect him with emotions, to achieve the right mood.

It is terribly important that the film actor should never ask those questions that are traditional and perfectly appropriate in theatre (and almost statutory in the USSR where theatre actors to a man are brought up on Stanislavsky)—'Why? What for? What is the key to the image? What is the underlying idea?' It was my great good fortune that Tolya Solonitsyn never asked questions like that—which to me are patently absurd—for he knew the difference between theatre and cinema. Or Nikolai Grinko—tender and noble as an actor and as a man; I love him dearly. A serene soul, subtle and with great depths.

Once when Rene Clair was asked about how he works with actors, he replied that he doesn't work with them, he pays them. Behind the apparent cynicism which to some might appear to be the only point of his remark (and that was how a number of Soviet critics took it), is concealed a profound respect for the professional who is master of his trade. A director is obliged to *work* with the person least fitted to be an actor. What can one say, for instance, about the way Antonioni works with his actors in *L'Avventura?* Or Orson Welles in *Citizen Kane?* All we are aware of is the unique conviction of the character. But this is a qualitatively different, screen conviction, the principles of which are not those that make acting expressive in a theatrical sense.

Unfortunately I never developed a working relationship with Donatas Banionis, who had the main part in *Solaris,* because he belongs to the category of analytical actors who cannot work without knowing the why and the wherefore. He cannot play anything spontaneously from within himself. He has first to build up his role; he has to know the relationship between the sequences, and what the other actors are doing, not only in his own scenes but in the whole film; he tries to take over from the director. This is almost certainly the result of all the years he spent in the theatre. He cannot accept that in cinema the actor must not have a picture of how the finished film is going to look. But even the best director, who knows exactly what he wants, can seldom envisage the final result exactly. All the same Donatas was very good indeed, and I can only be grateful that he played it rather than anyone else; but it was not easy.

The more analytical, cerebral actor assumes that he knows the film as it will be, or at any rate having studied the script makes

painful efforts to envisage it in its final form. By assuming that he knows how the film has to be, the actor starts to play the 'end product'—that is, his conception of his role; in doing so he is negating the very principle of the creation of the cinema image.

I have already mentioned that every actor demands a different approach, and indeed the same actor can even have to be approached differently for each new part. The director is obliged to be inventive in his search for the best ways of making him do what he wants. Kolya Burlyaev as Boriska, the bell-caster's son in *Audrey Rublyov* was working with me for the second time after *Ivan's Childhood.* All the time we were shooting I had to give him to understand through my assistants that I was thoroughly dissatisfied with his work, and might retake his scenes using another actor. I wanted him to feel disaster hanging over him, perhaps about to fall, so that he would genuinely be feeling acutely insecure. Burlyaev is an extraordinarily dissipated, shallow and ostentatious actor. His bursts of temperament are artificial. That was why I had to have recourse to such severe measures. Even so his performance was not on the same level as that of my favourite actors—Irma Rausch, Solonitsyn, Grinko, Beyshenagiev, Nazarov. (Nor, for me, was Lapikov's performance in tune with the others: he played Kyril theatrically, acting out the conception, acting his own view of his role, his persona.)

Let us look at Bergman's *Shame.* The film doesn't contain a single 'actor's piece' for the performer to 'give away' the director's purpose, to play the conception of the persona, his attitude to it, to assess it in relation to the overall idea; and the latter is entirely hidden within the dynamic of the characters' lives, at one with it. The people in the film are crushed by circumstances; they act only in accordance with their situation, to which they themselves are subordinate; they make no attempt to proffer us any idea, any perspective on what is happening, or to draw any conclusion. All of that is left to the film as a whole, to the director's vision. And how superbly it is accomplished! You cannot say in simple terms who amongst them is good or bad. I could never say that von Sydow is a bad man. They are all partly good and partly bad, each in his own way. No judgements are passed, because there is no hint of tendentiousness in any of the actors, and the circumstances of the film are used by the director to explore the human possibilities which they test, and not for a moment in order to illustrate a thesis.

Max von Sydow's character is developed with masterly power. He is a very good man; a musician; kind and sensitive. It turns out that he is a coward. But by no means every bold man is a good human being, and cowards are not always scoundrels. Of course, he is weak and irresolute. His wife is far stronger than he, so much so that she can overcome her fear. The hero lacks that strength. He is tormented by his own weakness, vulnerability, lack of resilience; he tries to hide, to cower in a corner, not to see and not to hear; and he does this like a child, naively and with complete sincerity. But when circumstances nevertheless force him to defend himself, he instantly turns into a scoundrel. He loses all that was best in him; but the drama and absurdity of his situation is that as he is now he becomes necessary to his wife, who, in her turn, looks to him for protection and succour instead of despising him as she always had. When he beats her about the face and says 'Get out!' she goes crawling after him. There is something here of the age-old idea of passive good and active evil; but its expression is immensely complex. At the beginning of the film the hero cannot even kill a chicken, but as soon as he has found a way of defending himself he becomes a cruel cynic. He has something of Hamlet: my view is that the Prince of Denmark perishes not as a result of the duel, when he dies physically, but immediately after the 'rat' scene, when he understands how irreversible are those laws of life which have forced him, a man of humanity and intellect, to act like the inferior people who inhabit Elsinore. Von Sydow is now a sinister character, afraid of nothing: he kills; will not raise a finger to save his fellows; pursues only his own interests. The point is that you have to be a person of great integrity to feel fear in the face of the foul necessity to kill and humiliate. And by shedding that fear and apparently acquiring courage, a person in fact loses his spiritual strength and intellectual honesty and parts from his innocence. War is the obvious catalyst for the cruel, anti-human elements in people. Bergman uses the war in this film exactly as he uses the heroine's illness in *Through a Glass Darkly:* to explore his view of man.

Bergman never allows his actors to be above the situation in which the characters are placed, and that is why he achieves such superb results. In cinema the director has to breathe life into the actor, not make of him a mouthpiece for his own ideas.

As a rule I never know in advance what actors I shall use—with

the one exception of Solonitsyn; he was in all my films, and I had an almost superstitious regard for him. The script of *Nostalgia* was written with him in mind, and it seems symholic that the actor's death as it were cut my life in two: the first part in Russia, and the rest—all that has happened and will happen since I left Russia.

The search for actors is a long and painful business. It is impossible to tell until half-way through shooting whether you have made the right choice. I would even go further and say that the hardest thing for me is to believe that I have chosen the right actor, and that his individuality does correspond to what I have planned.

It must be said that I am greatly helped by my assistants. When we were preparing to make *Solaris,* Larissa Pavlovna Tarkovskaya (my wife and constant helper) went off to Leningrad in search of someone to play Snout, and brought back the wonderful Estonian actor Yuri Yarvet who, at the time, was playing in *King Lear* for Grigoriy Kozintsev.

We had always known that for Snout we needed an actor with a naive, scared, crazy expression, and Yarvet, with his amazing blue eyes, corresponded exactly with what we had imagined. (Now I am really sorry that I insisted on his speaking his part in Russian, particularly as he still had to be dubbed; he could have been even more free, and therefore more vivid, more highly coloured, had he spoken in Estonian.) Although his lack of Russian made for difficulties, I was happy working with him: he is a first-class actor with a degree of intuition that is positively uncanny.

On one occasion we were rehearsing a scene and I asked him to go over the same bit but with a slight change of mood: it had to be 'a little sadder'. He did it all exactly as I wanted, and when we had finished the scene, he asked me in his appalling Russian: 'What does "a little sadder" mean?'

One of the differences between theatre and cinema is that the screen records *personality* from a mosaic of imprints on film, brought together by the director into an artistic unity. To the stage actor theoretical questions are of great importance: you have to work out the basis of each individual performance in relation to the overall concept of the production and develop a schema of the characters' actions and interactions, the pattern of behaviour and motivation that has to run through the play. In cinema all that is required is the truth of that moment's state of mind. But how hard that can sometimes be! How hard it is not to prevent the actor from living his own life in the shot; how difficult it is to penetrate to the innermost depths of the actor's psychological state, to that area which can vield such brilliantly vivid means for a character to express himself.

Since cinema is always recorded reality, I am puzzled by talk about the 'documentality' of acted material which became so widespread in the 'sixties and 'seventies.

Dramatised life cannot be documentary. Analysis of an acted film can and should include discussion of how the director has organised life in front of the camera; but not of the method used by the camera-man. Otar Yoseliani[22] for example, from *Falling Leaves,* through *Songthrush* and right up to *Pastorale,* moves steadily closer to life, aiming to capture it with ever greater immediacy. Only the most superficial, insensitive and formalistic critic could be so bogged down in documentary detail as to miss the poetic vision which distinguishes Yoscliani's films. And for me it is utterly unimportant whether his camera—in terms of how he takes his shots—is 'documentary' or poetic. Every artist, as they say, drinks from his own glass. And for the author of *Pastorale* nothing is more precious than the lorry seen on a dusty road, or the people going for a walk from their holiday villas, a scene in no way remarkable in itself, but observed with meticulous thoroughness—and full of poetry. He wants to tell of these things without romanticising them and without grandiloquence. This expression of his love for his subject is incomparably more convincing than Konchalovsky's consciously high-key, pseudo-poetic tone in *Romance about Lovers.* There is a histrionic note in the film, in keeping with the laws of some genre, thought up by the director and constantly referred to, in loud tones and large format, throughout shooting. And as a result, everything about the film is cold, intolerably high-flown, and corny. No genre can justify the director's deliberate use of a voice that is not his own to speak of things he doesn't mind about. It would be quite mistaken to see pedestrian prose in Yoseliani and high poetry in Konchalovsky. It is simply that with Yoseliani the poetic is embedded in what he loves and not in something dreamt up to illustrate a quasi-romantic world-view. . . .

I have a horror of tags and labels. I don't understand, for instance, how people can talk about Bergman's 'symbolism'. Far from being symbolic, he seems to me, through an almost biological naturalism, to arrive at the spiritual truth about human life that is important to him.

The point is that the depth and significance of a director's work can only be gauged in terms of what makes him shoot something: motivation is the decisive factor, manner and method are incidental.

As I see it, the one thing with which the director has to concern himself is the unfaltering assertion of his own ideas. What camera he uses is up to him. Questions of 'poetic', 'intellectual' or 'documentary' style are beside the point because documentalism and objectivity have no place in art. Objectivity can only be the author's, and therefore subjective, even if he is editing a newsreel.

If, as I maintain, film actors must play only exact situations, what—it may be asked—of tragi-comedy, farce, melodrama: all instances in which an actor's performance may be hyperbolised? But I think that the wholesale transfer of stage genres to the cinema is anyhow a questionable practice. The conventions of theatre are on a different scale. Any talk of genre in cinema refers as a rule to commercial films—situation comedy, Western, psychological drama, melodrama, musical, detective, horror or suspense movie. And what have any of these to do with art? They are for the mass consumer. Alas, they are also the form in which cinema exists now pretty well universally, a form imposed upon it from outside and for commercial reasons. There is only one way of thinking in cinema: poetically. Only with this approach can the irreconcilable and the paradoxical be resolved, and the cinema be an adequate means of expression of the author's thoughts and feelings.

The true cinema image is built upon the destruction of genre, upon conflict with it. And the ideals that the artist apparently seeks to express here obviously do not lend themselves to being confined within the parameters of a genre.

What is Bresson's genre? He doesn't have one. Bresson is Bresson. He is a genre in himself. Antonioni, Fellini, Bergman, Kurosawa, Dovzhenko, Vigo, Mizoguchi, Bunuel—each is identified with himself. The very concept of genre is as cold as the tomb. And is Chaplin—comedy? No: he is Chaplin, pure and simple; a unique phenomenon, never to be repeated. He is unadulterated hyperbole; but above all he stuns us at every moment of his screen existence with the truth of his hero's behaviour. In the most absurd situation Chaplin is completely natural; and that is why he is funny. His hero seems not to notice the world in which he lives, nor its weird logic. Chaplin is such a classic, so complete in himself, that he might have died three hundred years ago.

What could be more ridiculous or less probable than someone starting inadvertently to eat, along with his spaghetti, paper streamers hanging down from the ceiling? Yet with Chaplin the action is live, naturalistic. We know the whole thing is made up and exaggerated, but in his performance the hyperbole is utterly naturalistic and probable, and therefore convincing—and superbly funny. He doesn't play. He lives those idiotic situations, is an organic part of them.

The nature of film acting is exclusive to cinema. Of course every director works differently with his actors, and Fellini's are quite unlike Bresson's, because each director requires different human types.

Looking at Protozanov's[23] silent films—and these were very popular in their day—one feels almost embarrassed by the actors' wholesale acceptance of theatrical convention, their uninhibited use of dated stage cliches, the way they strain and exaggerate. They try so hard to be funny in comedy, or expressive in dramatic situations, and the harder they try the clearer it becomes, over the years, that their 'method' is hollow. Most films of that period dated rapidly because actors had no understanding of the specific demands of cinematic production; that was why their appeal was so shortlived.

Bresson's actors on the other hand will never seem dated, any more than his films will. There is nothing calculated or special in their performances, only the profound truth of human awareness within the situation defined by the director. They do not play personae but live their own inner lives in front of our eyes. Not for one moment does Mouchette reflect on her audience, or think of trying to convey the full 'depths' of what is happening to her. She never 'shows' the audience what a bad way she is in. She seems not even to suspect that her inner life may be observed, witnessed. She lives, exists, within her constricted, concentrated world, plumbing its depth. That is the secret of her magnetism, and I have no doubt that decades hence the film will be as overwhelming as it was on the day of its first showing. Dreyer's silent *Joan of Arc* has never ceased to affect us just as strongly.

Of course people don't learn from experience; today's directors constantly use styles of performance that belong patently to the past. Even Larissa Shepitko's Ascenf is marred for me by her determination to be expressive and significant: the result is that her

'parable' has meaning only on one level. As so often happens, her effort to 'stir' the audience makes for an exaggerated emphasis on her characters' emotions. It is as if she were afraid of not being understood, and had made her characters walk on invisible buskins. Even the lighting is calculated to instil the performances with meaning. Unfortunately the effect is stilted and false. In order to oblige the audience to sympathise with the characters, the actors have been made to demonstrate their suffering. Everything is more painful, more tortured, than in real life—even the torment and the pain; and above all, more portentous. And the impression is one of cold indifference because the author has not understood her own purpose. The film is old before it is born. Never try to convey your idea to the audience—it is a thankless and senseless task. Show them life, and they'll find within themselves the means to assess and appreciate it.

Cinema doesn't need actors who *play.* They are unbearable to watch, because we realised long ago what they were aiming at, and yet they go doggedly on, spelling out the meaning of the text on every possible level. They cannot rely on our understanding by ourselves. And one is forced to ask, what distinguishes these modern performers from Mozhukhin,[24] the star of the pre-Revolutionary Russian screen? The fact that these films are technically more advanced? But technical advance is not a criterion, and if it were, we should have to accept that cinema is not art. Technical questions are important commercially, in terms of the show, but are not central to the problem of cinema, and throw no light on the secret of cinema's unique power to affect us. Otherwise we should no longer be moved by Chaplin, Dreyer or Dovzhenko—and these still fire our imaginations today.

Being funny is not the same as making people laugh. Arousing sympathy doesn't mean squeezing tears out of the audience. Hyperbole is admissible only as a construction principle of the whole work, as an element in its image system, not as the principle of its methodology. The author's handwriting must not be heavy, or underlined or copper-plate.

Sometimes the utterly unreal comes to express reality itself. 'Realism', as Mitenka Karamazov says, 'is a terrible thing.' And Valery observed that the real is expressed most immanently through the absurd.

Art is a means of knowing, and as such is set always towards

Mirror
The burning thornbush. 'The angel appeared to the Prophet Moses as a burning bush; he led his people through the sea.'

realistic representation, but that of course is not at all the same thing as naturalism — or the depiction of mores. (Bach's D-minor choral prelude is realistic, because it expresses a vision of the truth.)

I have already said that it is in the nature of theatre to use conventions, to codify: images are established by means of suggestion. Through a detail theatre will make us aware of an entire phenomenon. Every phenomenon, of course, has a number of facets and aspects; and the fewer of these arc reproduced on the stage for the audience to reconstruct the phenomenon itself, the more precisely and effectively will the director be using the theatrical convention. Cinema by contrast reproduces a phenomenon in its details, its minutiae, and the more the director reproduces these in their concrete, sensuous form, the closer he will be to his aim. Blood has no right to be spilt on stage. But if we can see the actor slipping on blood where no blood is visible—that is theatre!

Directing *Hamlet* in Moscow, we decided to do Polonius' murder scene by having him emerge from his hiding place, mortally wounded by Hamlet, pressing to his chest a red turban he had been wearing on his head, as if covering his wound with it. Then he drops the turban, loses it, tries to retrieve it, in order to take it with him, to tidy up before he leaves—it's dirty to leave blood on the floor where the master can see—but he hasn't the strength. When Polonius lets the red turban fall, for us it's still a turban, but at the same time it's a sign of blood, a metaphor. In theatre actual blood cannot be convincing as a demonstration of poetic truth if it merely has meaning on one level, as a natural function. Blood in cinema, on the other hand, is blood, not a sign, not a symbol of anything else. Therefore when the hero of Wajda's *Ashes and Diamonds* is killed surrounded by sheets hanging out to dry, and he presses one of these to his chest as he falls, and his scarlet blood spreads across the white linen to make a red and white symbol of the Polish flag, the resulting image is more literary than cinematic, even though it is extraordinarily powerful emotionally.

Cinema is too dependent on life, listens to it too intently, to want to fetter it with genre, or bring out emotion with the help of genre templates. It is not like the theatre which functions with ideas, where even an individual character is an idea.

Of course all art is artificial. It only symbolises the truth. That's obvious enough. But the sort of artificiality that comes from lack of skill, of professional flair, cannot be passed off as style; when

exaggeration is not inherent in the imagery but is merely an exaggerated attempt and desire to please, it's a sign of provincialism, of the wish to be noticed as an artist. What the audience deserve is respect, a sense of their own dignity. Don't go blowing in their faces; that's something even cats and dogs dislike.

Again, it's a question of trusting your audience. Audience is an ideal concept: you are not thinking of each person sitting in the auditorium. The artist always dreams of attaining maximum understanding, even though what he actually gives the audience can only be a fraction of what he hopes for. Not that he has to be preoccupied with this question—what he has constantly to bear in mind is his own sincerity in the realisation of his conception.

Actors are often told to 'get the meaning across'. And so the actor obediently 'carries the meaning'—and sacrifices the truth of the persona in the process. How can anyone have so little faith in an audience? The desire to meet them half way is not enough.

In Yoseliani's *Songthrush* the main role was entrusted to a non-professional. And yet the hero's authenticity is beyond any doubt; he is alive on the screen, his life is full-blooded and unconditional, impossible to question or to ignore. For real, vital life is immediately relevant to each of us and to all that happens to us.

For an actor to be effective on the screen it is not enough for him to be understandable. He has to be truthful. What is truthful is seldom easy to understand, and always gives a particular sense of fullness, of completeness—it's always a unique experience that can be neither taken apart nor finally explained.

Music and noises

Music, of course, came into cinema in the days of the silent movie, with the pianist who illustrated what was happening on the screen with a musical accompaniment appropriate to the rhythm and emotional pitch of the visual image. It was a pretty mechanical and arbitrary way of tagging music onto the picture, a facile system of illustration, with the object of intensifying the impression made by each episode. Curiously enough, music has gone on being used in

Mirror *'Mother came and beckoned me, and flew away.*

Eurydice

A person has one body,
Singleton, all on its own,
The soul has had more than enough
Of being cooped up inside
A casing with ears and eyes
The size of a five-penny piece
And skin—just scar after scar—
Covering a structure of bone.

Out through the cornea it flies
Into the bowl of the sky,
On to an icy spoke,
To a wheeling flight of birds,
And hears through the barred window
Of its living prison-cell
The crackle of forests and corn-fields
The trumpet of seven seas.

A bodyless soul is sinful
Like a body without a shirt—
No intention, nothing gets done,
No inspiration, never a line.
A riddle with no solution:
Who is going to come back
After dancing on the dance-floor
Where there's nobody to dance?

And I dream of a different soul
Dressed in other clothes:
Burning as it runs
From timidity to hope,
Spiritous and shadowless
Like fire it travels the earth,
Leaves lilac behind on the table
To be remembered by.

Run along then, child, don't fret
Over poor Eurydice,
Bowl your copper hoop along
Whip it through the world,
So long as even quarter pitch
With cheerful tone and cold
In answer to each step you take
The earth rings in your ears.

Arseniy Tarkovsky
(Translated by Kitty Hunter-Blair)

much the same way up to the present day. Episodes are so to speak propped up with a musical accompaniment which reiterates the main theme in order to heighten its emotional resonance—or sometimes just to make the best of a scene that hasn't worked.

I find music in film most acceptable when it is used like a refrain. When we come across a refrain in poetry we return, already in possession of what we have read, to the first cause which prompted the poet to write the lines originally. The refrain brings us back to our first experience of entering that poetic world, making it immediate and at the same time renewing it. We return, as it were, to its sources.

Used this way, music does more than intensify the impression of the visual image by providing a parallel illustration of the same idea; it opens up the possibility of a *new,* transfigured impression of the same material: something different in kind. Plunging into the musical element which the refrain brings into being, we return again and again to the emotions the film has given us, with our experience deepened each time by new impressions. With the introduction of the musical progression, the life recorded in the frame can change its colour and sometimes even its essence.

Furthermore, music can bring to the material filmed a lyrical note born of the author's experience. In the autobiographical *Mirror,* for instance, music is often introduced as part of the material of life, of the author's spiritual experience, and thus as a vital element in the world of the film's lyrical hero.

Music can be used to produce a necessary distortion of the visual material in the audience's perception, to make it heavier or lighter, more transparent, subtler, or, on the contrary, coarser... By using music, it is possible for the director to prompt the emotions of the audience in a particular direction, by widening the range of their perception of the visual image. The meaning of the object is not changed, but the object itself takes on a new colouring. The audience sees it (or at least, is given the opportunity of seeing it) as part of a new entity, to which the music is integral. Perception is deepened.

But music is not just an appendage to the visual image. It must be an essential element of the realisation of the concept as a whole. Properly used, music has the capacity to change the whole emotional tone of a filmed sequence; it must be so completely one with the visual image that if it were to be removed from a particular

episode, the visual image would not just be weaker in its idea and its impact, it would be qualitatively different.

I am not sure that in my films I have always succeeded in fulfilling the theoretical demands I am putting forward here. I have to say that in my heart of hearts I don't believe films need music at all. However, I have not yet made a film without it, though I moved in that direction in *Stalker* and *Nostalgia.* . . . For the moment at least music has always had a rightful place in my films, and has been important and precious.

I should like to hope that it has never been a flat illustration of what was happening on the screen, to be felt as a kind of emotional aura around the objects shown, in order to force the audience to see the image in the way I wanted. In every instance, music in cinema is for me a natural part of our resonant world, a part of human life. Nevertheless, it is quite possible that in a sound film that is realised with complete theoretical consistency, there will be no place for music: it will be replaced by sounds in which cinema constantly discovers new levels of meaning. That is what I was aiming at in *Stalker* and *Nostalgia.*

It may be that in order to make the cinematic image sound authentically, in its full diapason, music has to be abandoned. For strictly speaking the world as transformed by cinema and the world as transformed by music are parallel, and conflict with each other. Properly organised in a film, the resonant world is musical in its essence—and that is the true music of cinema.

Bergman is a master with sound. It's impossible to forget what he does with the lighthouse in *Through a Glass Darkly:* a sound on the very brink of audibility.

Bresson is brilliant in his use of sound, so is Antonioni in his trilogy. . . . But all the same, I have a feeling that there must be other ways of working with sound, ways which would allow one to be more accurate, more true to the inner world which we try to reproduce on screen; not just the author's inner world, but what lies within the world itself, what is essential to it and does not depend on us.

The sounds of the world reproduced naturalistically in cinema are impossible to imagine: there would be a cacophony. Everything that appeared on the screen would have to be heard on the soundtrack, and the result would amount to sound not being treated at all in the film. If there is no selection then the film is tantamount to silent,

Ignatievo Forest

Embers of last leaves, a dense self-immolation,
Ascend into the sky, and in your path
The entire forest lives in just such irritation
As you and I have lived for this year past.

The road is mirrored in your tearful eyes
Like bushes in a flooded field at dusk,
You mustn't fuss and threaten, leave it be,
Don't jar the stillness of the Volga woodland.

You can hear the sound of old life breathing:
Slime covered mushrooms grow in the wet grass,
Slugs have bored through into the very core,
And a gnawing dampness niggles at the skin.

All of our past is like a kind of threat:
'Look out, I'm coming back, see if I don't kill you!
The sky huddles up, holds a maple, like a rose—
Let it glow still hotter!—raised almost to the eyes.

Arseniy Tarkovsky
(Translated by Kitty Hunter-Blair)

since it has no sound expression of its own. In itself, accurately recorded sound adds nothing to the image system of cinema, for it still has no aesthetic content.

As soon as the sounds of the visible world, reflected by the screen, are removed from it, or that world is filled, for the sake of the image, with extraneous sounds that don't exist literally, or if the real sounds are distorted so that they no longer correspond with the image—then the film acquires a resonance.

For instance when Bergman uses sound apparently naturalistically—hollow footsteps in an empty corridor, the chime of a clock, the rustle of a dress, the effect is in fact to enlarge the sounds, single them out, hyperbolise them . . . He singles out one sound and excludes all the incidental circumstances of the sound world that would exist in real life. In *Winter Light* he has the noise of the water in the stream where the suicide's body has been found on the bank. Throughout the entire sequence, all in long and medium shots, nothing can be heard but the uninterrupted sound of the water—no footsteps, no rustle of clothes, none of the words exchanged by the people on the bank. That is the way sound is made expressive in this sequence, that is how he uses it.

Above all, I feel that the sounds of this world are so beautiful in themselves that if only we could learn to listen to them properly, cinema would have no need of music at all.

Nonetheless, there are moments in modern cinema when music is exploited with consummate mastery: as in Bergman's *Shame* when snatches of beautiful melody come breaking through the crackles and squeaks of an inferior little transistor; or Nino Rota's music in 8 1/2—sad, sentimental, and at the same time slightly mocking . . .

Electronic music seems to me to have enormously rich possibilities for cinema. Artemiev and I used it in some scenes in *Mirror*.

We wanted the sound to be close to that of an earthly echo, filled with poetic suggestion—to rustling, to sighing. The notes had to convey the fact that reality is conditional, and at the same time accurately to reproduce precise states of mind, the sounds of a person's interior world. The moment we hear what it is, and realise that it's being constructed, electronic music dies; and Artemiev had to use very complex devices to achieve the sounds we wanted. Electronic music must be purged of its 'chemical' origins, so that as we listen we may catch in it the primary notes of the world.

Instrumental music is artistically so autonomous that it is far harder for it to dissolve into the film to the point where it becomes an organic part of it. Therefore its use will always involve some measure of compromise, because it is always illustrative. Furthermore, electronic music has exactly that capacity for being absorbed into the sound. It can be hidden behind other noises and remain indistinct; like the voice of nature, of vague intimations . . . It can be like somebody breathing.

CHAPTER VI

The author in search of an audience

Cinema's equivocal position between art and industry accounts for many of the anomalies in the relations between author and public. Starting from that generally accepted fact, I want to look at one or two of the difficulties facing cinema, and examine some of the consequences of this situation.

All manufacture, as we know, has to be viable; in order to function and develop, it has not merely to pay for itself but to yield a certain profit. Therefore, a film succeeds or fails and its aesthetic value is established, paradoxically enough, according to supply and demand—to straightforward market laws. Need one add that no other art has been so subject to criteria of this kind. As long as cinema remains in its present position, it will never be easy for a true cinematic work to see the light of day, let alone become accessible to a wider public.

Of course, the yardsticks by which art is distinguished from non-art, from sham, are so relative, indistinct and impossible to demonstrate, that nothing could be easier than to substitute for aesthetic criteria purely utilitarian measures of assessment, which may be dictated either by the desire for the greatest possible financial profit or from some ideological motive. Either is equally far from the proper purpose of art.

Art is by nature aristocratic, and naturally selective in its effect on the audience. For even in its 'collective' manifestations, like theatre or cinema, its effect is bound up with the intimate emotions of each person who comes into contact with a work. The more the individual is traumatised and gripped by those emotions, the more significant a place will the work have in his experience.

The aristocratic nature of art, however, does not in any way absolve the artist of his responsibility to his public and even, if you like, more broadly, to people in general. On the contrary: because of his special awareness of his time and of the world in which he lives, the artist becomes the voice of those who cannot formulate or express their view of reality. In that sense the artist is indeed *vox populi.* That is why he is called to serve his own talent, which means serving people.

I cannot in fact understand the problem of an artist's so-called 'freedom' or 'lack of freedom'. An artist is never free. No group of people lacks freedom more. An artist is bound by his gift, his vocation.

On the other hand he is at liberty to choose between realising his talent as fully as he can, or selling his soul for thirty pieces of silver. Was the frenzied search of Tolstoy, Dostoievsky and Gogol not prompted by their awareness of their vocation, of their ordained role?

I am also convinced that no artist would work to fulfil his personal spiritual mission if he knew that no one was ever going to see his work. Yet at the same time, when he is working he must put a screen between himself and other people, in order to be shielded from empty, trivial topicality. For only total honesty and sincerity, compounded by the knowledge of his own responsibility towards others, can ensure the fulfilment of an artist's creative destiny.

In the course of my career in the Soviet Union I was frequently accused (and the charge is made all too often) of having 'cut myself off from reality', as if I had consciously isolated myself from the everyday interests of the people. I must admit in all candour that I never understood what these accusations meant. Surely it's idealistic to imagine that an artist, or anyone else for that matter, is capable of dropping out of society, of his time, of being 'free' from the time and space into which he has been born? I've always thought that anybody, and any artist (however far apart contemporary artists may be in their aesthetic and theoretical positions), must of necessity be a product of the reality that surrounds him. An artist might be accused by some of interpreting reality from an unacceptable point of view, but that is not the same as being cut off from it. Clearly each person expresses his own time and necessarily carries its laws of development within him, regardless of the fact that not everyone is inclined to take these laws into account or to face up to those aspects of reality which they don't like.

Art, as I said earlier, affects a person's emotions, not his reason. Its function is, as it were, to turn and loosen the human soul, making it receptive to good. When you see a good film, look at a painting, listen to music (assuming, of course, that it's 'your' sort of art) you are disarmed and entranced from the start—but not by an idea, not by a thought. In any case, as we said earlier, the idea of a great work is always equivocal, always has two faces, as Thomas Mann put it; it is as multi-faceted and indefinite as life itself. The author cannot

therefore reckon on his work being understood in one particular way and according to his own perception of it. All he can do is present his own image of the world, for people to be able to look at it through his eyes, and be filled with his feelings, doubts and thoughts . . .

For their part, audiences, I'm quite sure, are far more discerning, subtle and unpredictable in their demands than is often supposed by those responsible for the distribution of works of art. And so an artist's perception of things, however complex or rarified it may be, is able—I would even say bound—to find an audience; and however small the latter may be, it will be in perfect accord with the particular work. Tirades about whether or not a work makes sense to the so-called 'broad mass' of people—to some mythical majority—merely serve to befog the whole issue of how artist and audience relate to each other: in other words, of how the artist relates to his time. As Alexander Herzen wrote in *My Past and Thoughts:* 'In his true works the poet and artist is always national. Whatever he does, whatever aim or idea he may have in a work, he will always express, whether he wants to or not, some element of the national character; and he will express it more deeply and vividly than national history itself.'

The relationship between artist and audience is a two-way process. By remaining faithful to himself and independent of topicality, the artist creates new perceptions and raises people's level of understanding. In its turn a society's growing awareness builds up an energy supply which will subsequently cause a new artist to be born.

If we look at the greatest works of art we see that they exist as part of nature, part of truth, and independent of author or audience. Tolstoy's *War and Peace* or Thomas Mann's *Joseph and His Brothers* have a dignity which raises them far above the trivial, everyday interests of the times in which they were written.

That distancing, that view from the outside, from a certain moral and spiritual height, is what enables a work of art to live in historical time, its impact ever renewed and ever changing. (I have seen Bergman's *Persona* a great many times, and on each occasion it has given me something new. As a true work of art it always allows one to relate personally with the world of the film, interpreting it differently every time.)

The artist cannot, and has no right to, lower himself to some abstract, standardised level for the sake of a misconstrued notion of greater accessibility and understanding. If he did, it could only lead

Stalker
Andrey Tarkovsky during shooting.

to the decline of art—and we expect art to flourish, we believe that the artist still has untapped resources to discover, and at the same time we believe that audiences will make ever more serious demands. . . . At any rate, that is what we want to believe.

Marx, the materialist, said, 'If you want to enjoy art, you must be artistically educated.' The artist cannot make a specific aim of being understandable—it would be quite as absurd as its opposite: trying to be incomprehensible.

The artist, his product and his public are an indivisible entity, like a single organism linked by the same bloodstream. If conflict occurs between the parts of the organism, then it requires expert treatment and careful handling. Nothing could be more deleterious in its effect than the levelling down of commercial cinema or the production-line standards of television; these corrupt the public to an

unforgivable degree, denying them the experience of true art.

We have almost totally lost sight of the beautiful as a criterion of art: in other words, of the aspiration to express the ideal. Every age is marked by the search for truth. And however grim that truth, it still contributes to the moral health of humanity. Its recognition is a sign of a healthy time and can never be in contradiction with the moral idea. Attempts to hide the truth, cover it, keep it secret, artificially setting it against a distorted moral ideal on the assumption that the latter will be repudiated in the eyes of the majority by the impartial truth—can only mean that ideological interests have been substituted for aesthetic criteria. Only a faithful statement about the artist's time can express a true, as opposed to a propagandist, moral ideal.

This was the theme of *Audrey Rublyov*. It looks at first sight as if the cruel truth of life as he observes it is in crying contradiction with the harmonious ideal of his work. The crux of the question, however, is that the artist cannot express the moral ideal of his time unless he touches all its running sores, unless he suffers and lives these sores himself. That is how art triumphs over grim, 'base' truth, clearly recognising it for what it is, in the name of its own sublime purpose: such is its destined role. For art could almost be said to be religious in that it is inspired by commitment to a higher goal.

Devoid of spirituality, art carries its own tragedy within it. For even to recognise the spiritual vacuum of the times in which he lives, the artist must have specific qualities of wisdom and understanding. The true artist always serves immortality, striving to immortalise the world and man within the world. An artist who doesn't try to seek out absolute truth, who ignores universal goals for the sake of accidentals, can only be a time-server.

When I finish a work, and, after a longer or shorter interval and more or less blood and sweat as the case may be, it is finally released—then I confess that I stop thinking about it. The picture has sloughed me off, it has gone out on its own, to start an independent adult life away from its parent, and I no longer have any say in what will happen to it.

I know in advance that there's no point in counting on a unanimous audience reaction, not only because some people will like it while others find it infuriating, but because one has to take into account that the film will be taken differently and analysed in different ways even by the people who are well-disposed to it. And I

Stalker
The three principal actors on the trolley.

can only be glad if it allows of various interpretations.

It seems to me meaningless and futile to reckon the success of a film arithmetically, in terms of seats sold. Obviously a film is never taken in one way only and as signifying only one thing. The meaning of an artistic image is necessarily unexpected, since it is a record of how one individual has seen the world in the light of his own idiosyncrasies. Both the personality and the perception will be close to some people and utterly alien to others. That's the way it has to be. In any case art will go on developing as it always has, irrespective of anyone's will; and aesthetic principles, currently abandoned, will be overcome time and again by the artists themselves.

In one sense, therefore, the success of my film does not concern

me, for by that time it is done and I have no power to change it. But at the same time I cannot believe those directors who say they do not care how the audience will react. Every artist—I have no hesitation in stating—thinks of a meeting between his work and the audience; what he thinks, hopes, believes is that this production of his will turn out to be attuned to the times, and therefore vital to the cinema-goer, touching him in the innermost depths of his soul. There is no contradiction in the fact that I do nothing in particular to please an audience, and yet hope fervently that my picture will be accepted and loved by those who see it. The ambivalence of this position seems to me to be at the very heart of the problem of artist and audience—a relationship fraught with tension.

A director cannot be equally well understood by everyone, but is entitled to his own—more or less numerous—following among cinema-goers; this is the normal condition of existence for an individual artist, and of the evolution of cultural tradition in society. Of course each of us wants to find the maximum number of kindred spirits, who will appreciate and need us; but we cannot calculate our own success, and we are powerless to select our working principles in such a way as to ensure it. As soon as one begins to cater expressly for the auditorium, then we're talking of the entertainment industry, show business, the masses, or what have you, but certainly not of art which necessarily obeys its own immanent laws of development whether we like it or not.

Every artist performs his creative task in his own way; whether he makes a secret of it or not, however, contact and mutual understanding with the audience is invariably the object of his hopes and dreams, and all are equally downcast by failure. One remembers how Cezanne, recognised and acclaimed by his fellow-artists, was made deeply unhappy by the fact that his neighbour didn't appreciate his paintings; not that he could alter anything in his style.

I can accept that an artist may take on a commission to work on a particular subject. But I cannot accept the idea of control over the execution, over the treatment; that seems to me utterly futile and ill-conceived. There are self-existent factors which preclude the artist's making himself dependent upon audiences or anyone else: if he does so, then his own problems, inner conflict and pain will immediately be distorted by accents that do not belong to him. For the most intricate, burdensome, punishing aspect of the artist's work lies strictly in the domain of ethics: what is demanded of him is total

honesty and sincerity towards himself. And that means being honest and responsible towards the audience.

A director is not entitled to try to please anyone. He hasn't the right to restrict himself in the process of his work for the sake of success, and if he does he will inevitably pay the price: his plan and purpose, and their realisation, will no longer have the same meaning for him. It will be like a game of 'give-away'. Even if he knows before he starts that his work is not going to have a wide appeal, he still has no right to make changes in what he has been called to do.

Pushkin put it superbly:

You are a king. Live alone. Take a free road
And follow where your free mind leads you,
Bring to perfection the fruits of well-loved thoughts
Ask no reward for noble deeds accomplished.
Rewards are within you. Your supreme judge is yourself.
None will ever judge your work more sternly.
Discriminating artist, does it please you?

When I say I cannot influence the audience's attitude to myself, I'm attempting to formulate my own professional task. It's clearly very simple: to do what one has to, giving of one's utmost, and judging oneself by the most rigorous standards. How can there then be any question of thinking about pleasing the audience, or worrying about giving the public an example to emulate? What audience? The anonymous masses? Robots?

It takes little enough to appreciate art: a sensitive, subtle, suggestible soul, open to beauty and good, capable of spontaneous aesthetic experience. In Russia my audiences included many people who could boast no particular knowledge or education. I believe that sensitivity to art is given a person at birth, and depends subsequently on his spiritual growth.

I have always been infuriated by the formula, 'people won't understand'. What does it mean? Who can take it upon themselves to express the people's opinion, making declarations on their own behalf as if quoting the majority of the population? Who can know what people will or won't understand? What they need or what they want? Has anyone ever conducted a survey or made the slightest conscientious effort to discover the people's true interests, their ways of thinking, expectations, hopes—or, indeed, disappointments? I am a part of my people: I have lived with my fellow-citizens, been through the same bit of history as anyone else of my age, observed and thought about the same happenings, and processes, and even now, in the West, I remain a son of my country. I am a cell of it, a particle, and I hope that I express ideas that stem from deep within our cultural and historical traditions.

When you make a film you naturally are sure that things that excite and concern you will also be of interest to other people. You hope that audiences will respond without your trying to pander to them or to ingratiate yourself. Respect for an audience, or for any interlocutor, can only be based on the conviction that they are no stupider than you. The *sine qua non* of any conversation, however, is some sort of common language. As Goethe said, if you want an intelligent answer you must ask an intelligent question. True dialogue between director and cinema-goer is possible only when both have the same depths of understanding of the problems, or at least approach the director's self-imposed tasks on the same level.

It hardly needs to be said that while literature has been developing for something like three or four thousand years, cinema is still proving that it can be equal to the problems of its time just as the other, established arts have been. Whether up till now cinema can actually claim any authors worthy to stand alongside the creators of the great masterpieces of world literature is extremely doubtful. And my own feeling is that this could be because cinema is still trying to define its own specific character, its own language, at times perhaps coming quite close to doing so. The question of what determines cinematic language is as yet unsolved, and this book only attempts to elucidate one or two points. In any case the state of modern cinema cries out for us to think again and again about its virtues as an art form.

We are still uncertain about the material in which a film image is to be modelled, unlike the writer, who knows that he will affect his readers with words. Cinema as a whole is still looking for what determines it; furthermore, every director in the field is trying to find his own individual voice; whereas painters all use colours, and a huge multitude of canvasses are painted. A great deal of work lies ahead for both directors and audiences if this outstandingly mass-appeal medium is truly to become an art form.

I have deliberately concentrated on the objective difficulties currently facing both audiences and directors. The artistic image is selective in its effect on the auditorium; this is in the nature of things.

In the case of cinema the problem is made more acute by the fact that making films is an extraordinarily expensive pastime. At present we therefore have a situation in which the cinema-goer is at liberty to choose the director who happens to be on his wavelength, while the director is not entitled to declare frankly that he has no interest in that section of the cinema-going public that uses films as entertainment and as an escape from the sorrows, cares and deprivations of everyday life.

Not that the cinema-goer is to be blamed for his poor taste—life doesn't give us all the same opportunities for developing our aesthetic perceptions. That's where the real difficulty lies. But it doesn't help to pretend that the audience is the artist's 'supreme judge'. Who? What audience? Those responsible for cultural policy should be concerned with creating a certain climate, a certain standard of artistic production, instead of fobbing audiences off with stuff that is blatantly phoney and unreal, and so corrupting their taste irrevocably. However, that is not a problem to be solved by the artist. Unfortunately, he is not responsible for cultural policy. We can answer only for the standard of our works. The artist will talk honestly about all that concerns him, holding nothing back, if the audience finds the topic of conversation truly relevant and important.

There was a time, after *Mirror*—and after years of hard work making films—when I actually considered giving up the whole business. . . . But once I started to get all those letters (a few of which I quoted earlier) I realised that I hadn't the right to do anything so drastic, and that if there were some among the audience who could be so candid and open-hearted, and who really needed my films, then I had to go on working whatever the cost to myself.

If there are cinema-goers for whom it is important and rewarding to enter into dialogue specifically with me, that is the greatest stimulus I can have for my work. If there are some who talk the same language as myself, then why should I neglect their interests for the sake of some other group of people who arc alien and remote? They have their own gods and idols and we have nothing in common.

All the artist can offer the audience is to be open and candid in his combat with his material. And the audience will appreciate what our exertions mean.

If you try to please audiences, uncritically accepting their tastes, it can only mean that you have no respect for them: that you simply want to collect their money; and instead of training the audience by giving them inspiring works of art, you are merely training the artist to ensure his own income. For their part, the audience will continue, their contentment unalloyed, to feel they are right—seldom a well-founded conviction. The failure to develop the audience's capacity to criticise our own judgements is tantamount to treating them with total indifference.

CHAPTER VII

The artist's responsibility

I want to begin by returning to the comparison, or rather the contrast, between literature and cinema. The one feature shared by these two completely autonomous and independent art forms, as I see it, is their marvellous freedom to use material as they will.

I wrote earlier of the mutual dependence of the cinematic image and the experience of author and audience. Prose too, of course, relies on the reader's emotional, spiritual and intellectual experience, as does all art. And the interesting thing about literature is that however minute the detail which the author puts into each page, the reader will still 'read' and 'see' only what he has been prepared for by his own—and only his own—experience, by the mould of his character, since these have formed the predilections and idiosyncrasies of taste which have become a part of him. Not even the most naturalistic and detailed passages of prose remain within the writer's control: whatever happens the reader will perceive them subjectively.

Cinema is the one art form where the author can see himself as the creator of an unconditional reality, quite literally of his own world. In cinema man's innate drive to self-assertion finds one of its fullest and most direct means of realisation. A film is an emotional reality, and that is how the audience receives it—as a *second reality*.

The fairly widely held view of cinema as a system of signs therefore seems to me profoundly and essentially mistaken. I see a false premise at the very basis of the structuralist approach.

We are talking about the different kinds of correlation with reality on which each art form bases and develops its own distinct set of conventions. In this respect I classify cinema and music among the *immediate* art forms since they need no mediating language. This fundamental determining factor marks the kinship between music and cinema, and for the same reason distances cinema from literature, where everything is expressed by means of language, by a system of signs, of hieroglyphics. The literary work can only be received through symbols, through concepts—for that is what words are; but cinema, like music, allows for an utterly direct, emotional, sensuous perception of the work.

By means of words literature *describes* an event, an inner world, an external reality which the writer wants to reproduce. Cinema uses the materials given by nature itself, by the passage of time, manifested within space, that we observe about us and in which we live. Some image of the world arises in the writer's consciousness which he then, by means of words, writes down on paper. But the roll of film imprints mechanically the features of the unconditional world which came into the camera's field of vision, and from these an image of the whole is subsequently constructed.

Directing in the cinema is literally being able to 'separate light from darkness and dry land from the waters'. The director's power is such that it can create the illusion for him of being a kind of demiurge; hence the grave temptations of his profession, which can lead him very far in the wrong direction. Here we are faced with the question of the tremendous responsibility, peculiar to cinema, and almost capital in its implications, which the director has to bear. His experience is conveyed to the audience graphically and immediately, with photographic precision, so that the audience's emotions become akin to those of a witness, if not actually of an author.

I want to emphasise yet again that, with music, cinema is an art which operates with *reality*. That is why I am so against structuralist attempt to look at a frame as a sign of something else, the meaning of which is summed up in the shot. The critical methods of one phenomenon cannot be applied mechanically and indiscriminately to another, yet that is what such an approach attempts. Take a particle of music—it is dispassionate, free of ideology. So too one cinema frame is always a particle of reality, bearing no idea; only the film as a whole could be said to carry, in a definite sense, an ideological version of reality. A *word* on the other hand is itself an idea, a concept, to some extent an abstraction. A word cannot be an empty sound.

In *Tales of Sevastopol* Lev Tolstoy describes the horrors of the military hospital in realistic detail. However punctilious his account of these fearful minutiae, however, it is still possible for the reader to work on the stark, naturalistic pictures, to modify and adapt them according to his own experience, wishes and views. A text is always taken selectively by the reader, who relates it to the laws of his own imagination.

A book read by a thousand different people is a thousand

different books. The reader with a vivid imagination can sec beyond the most laconic account, far further and more graphically than the writer himself has envisaged (in fact writers very often expect the reader to think on further). On the other hand, a reader who is restrained, inhibited by moral strictures and taboos, will see the most precise, cruel description only through the moral and aesthetic filter that has built up inside him. A kind of revision takes place within the awareness, however, and this process is inherent in the relationship between writer and reader; it's like a Trojan horse, in whose belly the writer makes his way into his reader's soul, and its distinctive function is to inspire the reader to have a part in the authorship of the work.

But does the cinema audience have any freedom of choice?

Each frame, each scene or episode is not just a description, but a facsimile of an action, or landscape, or face. Aesthetic norms are therefore wished upon the audience, concrete phenomena are shown unequivocally, and the individual will often set up a resistance to these on the strength of his personal experience.

If we turn to painting, by way of comparison, we find there is always a distance between the picture and the viewer, a distance that has been marked out in advance and which makes for a certain reverence towards what is depicted, for an awareness that what is in front of the beholder—whether he finds it comprehensible or not—is an *image* of reality: it would never occur to anyone to identify a picture with life. Obviously you can talk about whether what is on the canvas is 'life-like' or not; but in the cinema the audience never loses the feeling that the life being projected onto the canvas of the screen is 'really and truly' there. A person will often judge a film by the laws of real life, imperceptibly substituting, for those on which the author has based his film, laws derived from his ordinary, humdrum experience. Hence certain paradoxes in the way audiences appreciate films.

Why do mass audiences often prefer to watch exotic stories on the screen, things that have nothing to do with their lives?—They feel they know quite enough about their own lives, and that the last thing they want is to see more; and so in the cinema they want to have someone else's experience, and the more exotic it is, and the less like their own, the more desirable and exciting, and, in their eyes, the more instructive.

Of course sociological factors come into play here. Why else would some groups of people turn to art only for entertainment, while others look for an intelligent interlocutor? Why do some people only accept as real what is superficial, allegedly beautiful, but in fact vulgar, tasteless, inferior, hack—while others are capable of the most subtle, genuinely aesthetic experience? Where should we look for the causes of the aesthetic—sometimes, indeed, moral—deafness of vast numbers of people? Whose fault is it? And is it possible to help such people to experience inspiration and beauty, and the noble impulses that real art touches off in the soul?

I think the question answers itself; but for the moment I don't want to dwell on it, merely to state it. For one reason or another, even under different social systems, the general public are fed with appalling ersatz, and no one is concerned about instilling, or nurturing, taste. At least in the West the public are given the choice, and the great directors' films are at their disposal should they want them—there is no difficulty about seeing them; but the influence of these works can hardly be significant, if we are to judge by how often they perish in an unequal struggle against the commercial films that fill the screens.

Given the competition with commercial cinema, a director has a *particular responsibility* towards his audiences. I mean by this that because of cinema's unique power to affect an auditorium — in the identification of the screen with life—the most meaningless, unreal commercial film can have just the same kind of magical effect on the uncritical and uneducated cinema-goer as that derived by his discerning counterpart from a real film. The tragic and crucial difference is that if art can stimulate emotions and ideas, mass-appeal cinema, because of its easy, irresistible effect, extinguishes all traces of thought and feeling irrevocably. People cease to feel any need for the beautiful or the spiritual, and consume films like bottles of Coca-Cola.

The contact between film director and audience is unique to cinema in that it conveys experience imprinted on film in uncompromisingly affective, and therefore compelling, forms. The viewer feels a need for such vicarious experience in order to make up in part for what he himself has lost or missed; he pursues it in a kind of 'search for lost time'. And how *human* this newly gained experience will be depends only on the author. A grave responsibility!

I therefore find it very hard to understand it when artists talk about

Stalker
Degeneracy: the Stalker's daughter.

absolute creative freedom. I don't understand what is meant by that sort of freedom, for it seems to me that if you have chosen artistic work you find yourself bound by chains of necessity, fettered by the tasks you set yourself and by your own artistic vocation.

Everything is conditioned by necessity of one kind or another; and if it were actually possible to find a person in conditions of total freedom, he would be like some deep water fish that had been dragged up to the surface. It's curious to reflect that the inspired Rublyov worked within the strictures of the canon! And the longer I live in the West the more curious and equivocal freedom seems to me. Very few people are truly free, and our concern is to help more to become so.

,: In order to be free you simply have to be so, without asking permission of anybody. You have to have your own hypothesis about what you are called to do, and follow it, not giving in to circumstances or complying with them. But that sort of freedom demands powerful inner resources, a high degree of self-awareness, a consciousness of your responsibility to yourself and therefore to other people.

Alas, the tragedy is that we do not know how to be free—we demand freedom for ourselves at the expense of others and don't want to waive anything of our own for the sake of someone else:

that would be an encroachment upon our own rights and liberties. All of us are infected today with an extraordinary egoism. And that is not freedom; freedom means learning to demand first and foremost of oneself, not of life or of others, and knowing how to give: sacrifice in the name of love.

I don't want the reader to misunderstand me: what I am talking about is freedom in an ultimate, moral sense. I don't mean to polemicise, or to cast doubt on the unquestionable values and achievements which distinguish the European democracies. But the conditions of these democracies underline the problem of man's spiritual vacuum and loneliness. It seems to me that in the struggle for political liberties—important as these are—modern man has lost sight of that freedom which has been enjoyed in every previous epoch: that of being able to sacrifice oneself for the sake of another.

Looking back now at the films I have made so far, it strikes me that I have always wanted to tell of people possessed of *inner* freedom despite being surrounded by others who are inwardly dependent and unfree; whose apparent weakness is born of moral conviction and a moral standpoint and in fact is a sign of strength.

The Stalker seems to be weak, but essentially it is he who is invincible because of his faith and his will to serve others. Ultimately artists work at their professions not for the sake of telling someone about something, but as an assertion of their will to serve people. I am staggered by artists who assume that they freely create themselves, that it is actually possible to do so; for it is the lot of the artist to accept that he is created by his time and the people amongst whom he lives. As Pasternak put it:

Keep awake, keep awake, artist,
Do not give in to sleep . . .
You are eternity's hostage
And prisoner of time.

And I'm convinced that if an artist succeeds in doing something, he does so only because that is what people need—even if they are not aware of it at the time. And so it's always the audience who win, who gain something, while the artist loses, and has to pay out.

I cannot imagine my life being so free that I could do what I wanted; I have to do what seems most important and necessary at any given stage. And it's only possible to communicate with the audience

if one ignores that eighty per cent of people who for some reason have got it into their heads that we are supposed to entertain them. At the same time we have ceased to respect that eighty per cent to such an extent that we are prepared to entertain them, because we depend on them for money and for our next production. A grim look-out!

However, to return to that minority audience who do still look for real aesthetic impressions: that ideal audience in whom every artist unconsciously puts his hope—they will only respond wholeheartedly to a picture when it expresses what the author has lived and suffered. I respect them too much to want—or indeed to be able—to deceive them: I trust in them, which is why I dare to tell of what is most important and precious to me.

Van Gogh, who declared that 'duty is something absolute'; who admitted, 'no acclaim could please me more than to have *ordinary working people* wanting to hang my lithographs in their rooms or their workshops'; who identified himself with Heerkomer's dictum: 'in every sense, art is made for you, the people'—would never have thought of trying to please anyone in particular or make anyone like him. He took his work too seriously, fully aware of its social import; and saw his task as an artist as 'fighting' with all his strength, to the last breath, with the material of life, in order to express that ideal truth which lies hidden within it. That was how he saw his duty to his people: his burden and his privilege. He wrote in his diary: 'When a man expresses clearly what he wants to say, is that strictly speaking not enough? When he is able to express his thoughts beautifully, I won't argue that it's more pleasant to listen to him; but it doesn't add much to the beauty of truth, which is beautiful in itself.'

Since art is an expression of aspirations and hopes it has an immensely important part to play in the moral development of society—or at any rate, that is what it is called to do; if it fails, it can only mean that something is wrong with society. Art cannot be given purely utilitarian and pragmatic objectives. A film based on such premises cannot hold together as an artistic entity, for the effect of cinema—or any other art—on the beholder is far deeper and more complex than such terms allow. Art ennobles man by the mere fact of its existence. It creates those intangible bonds which draw mankind together into a community, and that moral atmosphere in which, as in a culture medium, art will once again germinate and flourish. Otherwise it will degenerate into a wilding like an apple-tree in an abandoned orchard. If art is not used according to its vocation, it dies away, and that means that nobody has any need of its existence.

In the course of my work I have noticed time and again, that if the external emotional structure of a film is based on the author's memory, when impressions of his personal life have been transmuted into screen images, then the film will have the power to move those who see it. But if a scene has been devised intellectually, following the tenets of literature, then no matter how conscientiously and convincingly it is done, it will still leave the audience cold. In fact even though it may strike some people as interesting and compelling when it first comes out, it will have no vital force and will not stand the test of time.

In other words, since you can't use the audience's experience in the way that literature does, allowing for an 'aesthetic assimilation' to take place in the consciousness of each reader—in cinema this is actually not feasible—you have to impart your own experience with the greatest possible sincerity. Not that this is easy, you have to steel yourself to do it! That is why even today, when all sorts of people, many of them barely literate professionally, have the possibility of making films, cinema can still only count a handful of masters in the entire world.

I am radically opposed to the way Eisenstein used the frame to codify intellectual formulae. My own method of conveying experience to the audience is quite different. Of course it has to be said that Eisenstein wasn't trying to convey his own experience to anyone, he wanted to put across ideas, purely and simply; but for me that sort of cinema is utterly inimical. Moreover Eisenstein's montage dictum, as I see it, contradicts the very basis of the unique process whereby a film affects an audience. It deprives the person watching of that prerogative of film, which has to do with what distinguishes its impact on his consciousness from that of literature or philosophy: namely the opportunity to live through what is happening on the screen as if it were his own life, to take over, as deeply personal and his own, the experience imprinted in time upon the screen, relating his own life to what is being shown.

Eisenstein makes thought into a despot: it leaves no air, nothing of that unspoken elusiveness which is perhaps the most captivating quality of all art, and which makes it possible for an individual to relate to a film. I want to make films which carry no oratorical, propagandist speech, but are the occasion for a deeply intimate

experience. Working in this direction, I am conscious of my responsibility to the cinema-goer, and I think that I can give him the unique and necessary experience for the sake of which he deliberately enters the darkened cinema.

Anyone who wants can look at my films as into a mirror, in which he will see himself. When the conception of a film is given forms that are life-like, and the concentration is on its affective function rather than on the intellectual formulae of poetic cinema (where the aim is manifestly to provide a vessel for ideas) then it is possible for the audience to relate to that conception in the light of individual experience.

I said earlier that personal bias must always be hidden: making a display of it may give a film immediate topical relevance, but its meaning will be confined to that passing usefulness. If it is to last, art has to draw deep on its own essence; only in this way will it fulfil that unique potential for affecting people which is surely its determining virtue and which has nothing to do with propaganda, journalism, commerce, philosophy or any other branch of knowledge or other social phenomena.

A phenomenon is recreated truthfully in a work of art through the attempt to rebuild the entire living structure of its inner connections. And not even in cinema does the artist have freedom of choice as he selects and combines facts from a lump of time—however thick or extensive that lump may be. His personality, of its own accord and of necessity, will influence both its selection and the process of giving artistic unity to what is selected.

Reality is conditioned by a great many causal connections, and the artist can only grasp some part of these. He is left with the ones he has succeeded in catching and reproducing, which are thus a manifestation of his individuality and uniqueness. Moreover, the more he aspires to a realistic account, the greater his responsibility for what he makes. Sincerity, truthfulness and clean hands are the virtues demanded of him.

The trouble (or perhaps it is the first cause of art?) is that nobody can reconstruct the whole truth in front of the camera. As applied to cinema, therefore, the term 'naturalism' can have no real meaning. (This does not prevent Soviet critics from using it as a term of abuse for shots which they see as unduly brutal: one of the principal charges made against *Andrey Rublyov* was that of 'naturalism', that is, of a deliberate aestheticisation of cruelty for its own sake.)

Stalker
The pool in the 'Zone: St John the Baptist, a detail from the Ghent altar by the van Eyck brothers, under the water.

Naturalism is a critical term used for a specific trend of nineteenth-century European literature and associated principally with the name of Zola. However, it can never be more than a relative concept in art, because nothing can ever be reproduced totally naturalistically. It's rubbish!

Each person tends to consider the world to be as he sees it and as he is conscious of it. But alas, it's not! And things that exist 'in themselves' only come to have existence 'for us' in the course of our own experience; man's need to know functions in this way, that is its meaning. People are limited in their capacity for knowing the world by the organs of the senses that nature has given them; and if, in the words of Nikolai Gumilyov,[25] we were to 'give birth' to an 'organ for a sixth sense' then obviously the world would appear to us in its other dimensions. Every artist is thus limited in his perception, in his understanding of the inner connections of the world about him. It's therefore meaningless to talk about naturalism in cinema as if phenomena could be recorded wholesale by the camera, irrespective of any artistic principles, so to speak in their 'natural state'. This sort of naturalism cannot exist.

Often enough the critics simply avail themselves of the term as a theoretical, 'objective' excuse for questioning the artist's right to observe facts that make the audience shudder with horror. This is labelled 'a problem' by the 'protective' lobby who feel it incumbent

Stalker
Resting during the journey.

upon them to ensure that everything is easy on the eye and the ear. But Dovzhenko and Eisenstein, who have been put onto pedestals, could both be accused of infringing the rules in this respect; so could any concentration-camp documentary that was uninhibited in its portrayal of human suffering and degradation.

When isolated episodes were taken out of context from *Andrey Ruhlyov* in order to accuse me of 'naturalism' (for instance the blinding scene and certain shots in the sack of Vladimir) I genuinely didn't understand the point of the accusation and I still don't. I'm not a drawing-room artist and it's not up to me to keep the public happy.

On the contrary: what I have to do is tell people the truth about our common existence as it appears to me in the light of my experience and understanding. That truth hardly promises to be easy or pleasant; and it is only by arriving at that truth that one can

Stalker
Alexander Kaidanovsky in the title role

achieve a moral victory over it within oneself.

If, on the other hand, I were to lie in my art while claiming that it was faithful to reality; to falsify my own purpose behind the facade of a cinematic spectacle in itself apparently true to life and therefore convincing in its effect on the audience—then I should certainly deserve to be called to account . . .

It was no accident that at the beginning of this chapter I applied the word 'capital' to the responsibility borne by the cinema author. By pointing up the idea like that—even if the result is an exaggeration—I wanted to emphasise the fact that the most *convincing* of the arts demands a special responsibility on the part of those who work in it: the methods by which cinema affects audiences can be used far more easily and rapidly for their moral decomposition, for the destruction of their spiritual defences, than

the means of the old, traditional art forms. Actually providing spiritual weapons, of course, and directing people towards good, must always be difficult . . .

The director's task is to recreate life: its movement, its contradictions, its dynamic and conflicts. It is his duty to reveal every iota of the truth he has seen—even if not everyone finds that truth acceptable. Of course an artist can lose his way; but even his mistakes are interesting provided they are sincere, for they represent the *reality* of his inner life, of the peregrinations and struggle into which the external world has thrown him. (And does anyone ever possess the whole truth?) All debate about what may or may not be shown can only be a pedestrian and immoral attempt to distort the truth.

Dostoievsky said: They always say that art has to reflect life and all that. But it's nonsense: the writer (poet) himself creates life such as it has never quite been before him . . .'

The artist's inspiration comes into being somewhere in the deepest recesses of his T. It cannot be dictated by external, business considerations. It is bound to be related to his psyche and his conscience; it springs from the totality of his world-view. If it is anything less, then it is doomed from the outset to be artistically void and sterile. It is perfectly possible to be a professional director or a professional writer and not to be an artist: merely a sort of executor of other people's ideas.

True artistic inspiration is always a torment for the artist, almost to the point of endangering his life. Its realisation is tantamount to a physical feat. That is the way it has always been, despite the popular misconception that pretty well all we do is tell stories that are as old as the world, appearing in front of the public like old grannies with scarves on our heads and our knitting in our hands to tell them all sorts of tales in order to keep them amused. The tale may be entertaining or enthralling, but will do only one thing for the audience: help them pass the time in idle chatter.

The artist has no right to an idea to which he is not socially committed, or the realisation of which could involve a dichotomy between his professional activity and the rest of his life. In our personal lives we perform actions, as honourable or dishonourable people. We accept that an honourable action may bring pressure down on us, or even bring us into conflict with our milieu. Why are we not prepared for the trouble that can ensue from our professional activities? Why are we afraid of being called to task when we embark

on a film? Why do we start by taking out an insurance so that the picture will be as innocuous as it is meaningless? Is it not because we want to receive instant remuneration for our work in the form of cash and comfort? One can only be staggered by the hubris of modern artists if we compare them, say, to the humble builders of Chartres Cathedral whose names arc not even known. The artist ought to be distinguished by selfless devotion to duty; but we forgot about that a long time ago.

Often people pay money in order to be given their little bit of entertainment by artists eager to oblige. Such eagerness, however, is based on indifference, for the artists cynically avail themselves of the spare time of honest people, of toilers, taking advantage of their gullibility and ignorance, of their lack of aesthetic education, in order to rob them spiritually and make money out of doing so. Activities of that kind are pretty unsavoury. An artist is only justified in his work when it is crucial to his way of life: not some incidental side-line, but the one mode of existence for his reproductive T.

Because of the often huge capital investment involved, cinema is uniquely aggressive and persistent in its methods of exacting the maximum return for a film. A picture is sold rather like standing crop, and this only goes to make our responsibility for our 'merchandise' the greater.

. . . I have always been amazed by Bresson: his concentration is extraordinary. Nothing incidental could ever creep in to his rigidly ascetic selection of means of expression; he could never toss off a picture. Serious, profound, noble, he is one of those masters whose every film becomes a fact of their spiritual existence. Apparently only in the final extremity of his own inner state will he be moved to make a film at all. And why?—who can tell . . .

In Bergman's *Cries and Whispers* there is one particularly powerful episode, perhaps the most important one in the film. Two sisters arrive in their father's house where their elder sister lies dying. The film develops out of the expectation of her death. Here, finding themselves alone together, they are suddenly and unexpectedly drawn together by their sisterly tie and by the longing for human contact; they talk and talk and talk . . . they cannot say all they want to . . . they caress each other . . . The scene creates a searing impression of human closeness . . . Fragile and longed for . . . And all the more so since in Bergman's film such moments are elusive and fleeting. For most of the film the sisters cannot be

Now summer is gone
And might never have been.
In the sunshine it's warm.
But there has to be more.

It all came to pass,
All fell into my hands
Like a five-petalled leaf,
But there has to be more.

Nothing evil was lost,
Nothing good was in vain,
All ablaze with clear light
But there has to be more.

Life gathered me up
Safe under its wing,
My luck always held,
But there has to be more.

Not a leaf was burnt up
Not a twig ever snapped . . .
Clean as glass is the day,
But there has to be more.

Arseniy Tarkovsky
(Translated by Kitty Hunter-Blair)

reconciled, cannot forgive each other even in the face of death. They are full of hatred, ready to torture each other and themselves. When they are briefly united, Bergman dispenses with dialogue and has a Bach 'cello suite playing on a gramophone; the impact of the scene is dramatically intensified, it becomes deeper, reaches out further. Of course this uplift, this flight into goodness, is patently a chimera—it is a dream of something that does not and cannot exist. It is what the human spirit seeks, what it yearns for; and that one moment allows a glimpse of harmony, of the ideal. But even this illusory flight gives the audience the possibility of catharsis, of spiritual cleansing and liberation.

I mention this because I want to underline my own belief that art must carry man's craving for the ideal, must be an expression of his reaching out towards it; that art must give man hope and faith. And the more hopeless the world in the artist's version, the more clearly perhaps must we see the ideal that stands in opposition to it—otherwise life would become impossible!

Art symbolises the meaning of our existence.

Why is it that the artist seeks to destroy the stability sought by society? Settembrini in Thomas Mann's *The Magic Mountain* says, 'I trust, engineer, that you have nothing against malice? I consider it to be reason's most brilliant weapon against darkness and ugliness. Malice, my dear sir, is the soul of criticism, and criticism—the source of progress and enlightenment.' The artist seeks to destroy the stability by which society lives, for the sake of drawing closer to the ideal. Society seeks stability, the artist—infinity. The artist is concerned with absolute truth, and therefore gazes ahead and sees things sooner than other people.

As for the results, we answer not for them but for choosing to fulfil or not to fulfil our duty. Such a starting-point lays on the artist the obligation to answer for his own fate. My own future is a cup that will not pass by me—consequently it must be drunk.

In all my films it seemed to me important to try to establish the links which connect people (oilier than those of the flesh), those links which connect me with humanity, and all of us with everything that surrounds us. I need to have a sense that I myself am in this world as a successor, that there is nothing accidental about my being here. Within each of us there must exist a scale of values. In *Mirror* 1 wanted to make people feel that Bach and Pergolesi and Pushkin's letter and the soldiers forcing the Sivash crossing, and also the intimate, domestic events—that all these things are in a sense equally important as human experience. In terms of a person's spiritual experience, what happened to him yesterday may have exactly the same degree of significance as what happened to humanity a thousand years ago . . .

In all my pictures the theme of roots was always of great importance: links with family house, childhood, country, Earth. I always felt it important to establish that I myself belong to a particular tradition, culture, circle of people or ideas.

Of great significance to me are those traditions in Russian culture which have their beginnings in the work of Dostoievsky. Their development in modern Russia is patently incomplete; in fact they tend to be looked down upon, or even ignored altogether. There are several reasons for this: first their total incompatibility with materialism, and then the fact that the spiritual crisis experienced by all Dostoievsky's characters (which was the inspiration of his work and that of his followers) is also viewed with misgiving. Why is this state of 'spiritual crisis' so feared in contemporary Russia?

I believe that it is always through spiritual crisis that healing occurs. A spiritual crisis is an attempt to find oneself, to acquire new faith. It is the apportioned lot of everyone whose objectives are on the spiritual plane. The soul yearns for harmony, and life is full of discordance. This dichotomy is the stimulus for movement, the source at once of our pain and of our hope: confirmation of our spiritual depths and potential.

This, too, is what *Stalker* is about: the hero goes through moments of despair when his faith is shaken; but every time he comes to a renewed sense of his vocation to serve people who have lost their hopes and illusions. I felt it was very important that the film observe the three unities of time, space and action. If in *Mirror* I was interested in having shots of newsreel, dream, reality, hope, hypothesis and reminiscence all succeeding one another in that welter of situations which confronts the hero with the ineluctable problems of existence, in *Stalker* I wanted there to be no time lapse between the shots. I wanted time and its passing to be revealed, to have their existence, within each frame; for the articulations between the shots to be the continuation of the action and nothing more, to involve no dislocation of time, not to function as a mechanism for selecting and dramatically organising the material—I wanted it to be as if the whole film had been made in a single shot.

Such a simple and ascetic approach seems to me to be rich in possibilities. I eliminated all I could from the script in order to have a minimum of external effects. As a matter of principle I wanted to avoid distracting or surprising the audience with unexpected changes of scene, with the geography of the action, with elaborate plot—I wanted the whole composition to be simple and muted.

More consistently than ever I was trying to make people believe that cinema as an instrument of art has its own possibilities which are equal to those of prose. I wanted to demonstrate how cinema is able to observe life, without interfering, crudely or obviously, with its continuity. For that is where I see the true *poetic* essence of cinema.

It occurred to me that excessive formal simplification could run the risk of appearing precious or mannered. In order to avoid that I tried to eliminate all touches of vagueness or innuendo in the shots—those elements that are regarded as the marks of 'poetic atmosphere'. That sort of atmosphere is always painstakingly built up; I was convinced of the validity of the opposite approach—I must not concern myself with atmosphere at all, for it is something that emerges from the central idea, from the author's realisation of his conception. And the more precisely the central idea is formulated, the more clearly the meaning of the action is defined for me, the more significant will be the atmosphere that is generated around it. Everything will begin to reverberate in response to the dominant note: things, landscape, actors' intonation. It will all become interconnected and necessary. One thing will be echoed by another in a kind of general interchange: and an atmosphere will come into being as a result of this concentration on what is most important. (The idea of creating atmosphere for its own sake seems to me strange. That, incidentally, is why I have never felt at home with the paintings of the Impressionists, who set out to imprint the moment for its own sake, to convey the instantaneous; that may be a means in art, but not an end.) It seems to me that in *Stalker,* where I tried to concentrate on what was most important, the atmosphere that came to exist as a result was more active and emotionally compelling than that of any of the films I had made previously.

What, then, is the main theme that had to sound through *Stalker?* In the most general terms, it is the theme of human dignity; and of how a man suffers if he has no self-respect.

Let me remind the reader that when the characters in the film set out on their journey into the Zone, their destination is a certain

From Alexander Pushkin's Letter to Pyotr Chaadayev

St Petersburg. 19 October 1836

. . . Of course the schism separated us from the rest of Europe and we took no part in any of the great events which stirred her; but we have had our own mission. It was Russia who contained the Mongol conquest within her vast expanses. The Tartars did not dare cross our western frontiers and so leave us in their rear. They retreated towards their deserts, and Christian civilisation was saved. To this end we were obliged to lead a completely separate existence which, while it left us Christian, also made us complete strangers in the Christian world, so that our martyrdom never impinged upon the energetic development of Catholic Europe. You say that the spring from which we drew our Christianity was impure, that Byzantium was despicable and despised, etc. —Ah, my friend, was Jesus Christ himself not born a Jew, and was Jerusalem not a laughing-stock among the nations? And are the Gospels any the less remarkable for that? We took the Gospels from the Greeks, and their traditions; not their puerile and contentious spirit. The mores of Byzantium were never those of Kiev. Until the time of Theophanes the Russian clergy were worthy of respect; they were never sullied by popish depravity, and would certainly never have provoked the Reformation at the very moment when mankind stood most in need of unity. I agree that our clergy today are backward. Do you want to know the reason why?—because they wear beards, that's all. They don't belong to good society. As for our historical significance, I can in no way share your view. The wars of Oleg and Sviatoslav, and even the wars of appanage—were these not the signs of that very life of restless adventure, of raw, aimless activity, that marks the youth of every people? The Tartar invasion is a sad and impressive spectacle. The awakening of Russia, the emergence of her power, her progress towards unity (Russian unity, of course), the two Ivans, the sublime drama begun in Uglich and brought to completion in the Ipatiev Monastery—all this is surely history, and not some half-forgotten dream? And Peter the Great, who is a universal history in himself? And Catherine II, who brought Russia to the threshold of Europe? And Alexander, who led you to Paris? And—hand on heart—do you not discern something imposing in the present situation of Russia, something that will strike the future historian? Do you think he will put us outside Europe? Devoted though I am personally to the Emperor, I do not by any means admire all that I see around me; as a man of letters, I feel embittered; and as a man of prejudice, I am vexed;—but I swear to you that not for anything in the whole world would I change my country for another, nor have any history other than that of our ancestors, such as it has been given us by God . . .

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Stalker *Fyodor Tyuchev's poem: HOW I LOVE YOUR EYES, MY FRIEND.*

How I love your eyes, my friend,
With their radiant play of fire,
When you lift them fleetingly
And like lightning in the skies
Your gaze sweeps swiftly round.

But there is charm more powerful still
In eyes downward cast
For the moment of a passionate kiss,
When through lowered eyelids glows
The sombre, dull flame of desire.

Fyodor Tyuchev, 1805-1873.
(Translated by Kitty Hunter-Blair)

room in which, we are told, everybody's most secret wish will be granted. And while the Writer and the Scientist, led by Stalker, are making their hazardous way over the strange expanse of the Zone, their guide tells them at one point either a true story, or else a legend, about another Stalker, nicknamed Diko-óbraz. He had gone to the secret place in order to ask for his brother, who had been killed through his fault, to be brought back to life. When Diko-óbraz returned home, however, he discovered that he had become fabulously wealthy. The Zone had granted what was in reality his most heartfelt desire, and not the wish that he had wanted to convince himself was most precious to him. And Diko-óbraz had hanged himself.

And so the two men reach their objective. They have been through a great deal, thought about themselves, reassessed themselves; and they haven't the courage to step across the threshold into the room which they have risked their lives to reach. They have become conscious that at the tragic, deepest level of awareness they are imperfect. They had summoned the strength to look into themselves—and had been horrified; but in the end they lack the spiritual courage to believe in themselves.

The arrival of Stalker's wife in the cafe where they are resting confronts the Writer and the Scientist with a puzzling, to them incomprehensible, phenomenon. There before them is a woman who has been through untold miseries because of her husband, and has had a sick child by him; but she continues to love him with the same selfless, unthinking devotion as in her youth. Her love and her devotion are that final miracle which can be set against the unbelief, cynicism, moral vacuum poisoning the modern world, of which both the Writer and the Scientist are victims.

Perhaps it was in *Stalker* that I felt for the first time the need to indicate clearly and unequivocally the supreme value by which, as they say, man lives.

. . .*Solaris* had been about people lost in the Cosmos and obliged, whether they liked it or not, to take one more step up the ladder of knowledge. Man's unending quest for knowledge, given him gratuitously, is a source of great tension, for it brings with it constant anxiety, hardship, grief and disappointment, as the final truth can never be known. Moreover, man has been given a conscience which means that he is tormented when his actions infringe the moral law, and in that sense even conscience involves

an element of tragedy. The characters in *Solaris* were dogged by disappointments,, and the way out we offered them was illusory enough. It lay in dreams, in the opportunity to recognise their own roots—those roots which for ever link man to the Earth which bore him. But even those links had already become unreal for them.

Even in *Mirror,* which is about deep, eternal, abiding human feelings, these feelings were a source of bewilderment and incomprehension for the hero, who could not grasp why he was condemned to suffer perpetually because of them, to suffer because of his own love and affection. In *Stalker* I make some sort of complete statement: namely that human love alone is—miraculously—proof against the blunt assertion that there is no hope for the world. This is our common, and incontrovertibly positive possession. Although we no longer quite know how to love. . . .

The Writer in *Stalker* reflects on the frustration of living in a world of necessities, where even chance is the result of some necessity which for the moment remains beyond our ken. Perhaps the Writer sets out for the Zone in order to encounter the Unknown, in order to be astonished and startled by it. In the end, however, it is simply a woman who startles him by her faithfulness and by the strength of her human dignity. Is everything subject to logic, then, and can it all be separated into its components and tabulated?

In this film I wanted to mark out that essentially human thing that cannot be dissolved or broken down, that forms like a crystal in the soul of each of us and constitutes its great worth. And even though outwardly their journey seems to end in fiasco, in fact each of the protagonists acquires something of inestimable value: faith. He becomes aware in himself of what is most important of all; and that most important thing is alive in every person.

I was no more interested, therefore, in the fantastic plot of *Stalker* than I had been in the story-line of *Solaris.* Unfortunately the science fiction element in *Solaris* was nonetheless too prominent and became a distraction. The rockets and space stations—required by Lem's novel—were interesting to construct; but it seems to me now that the idea of the film would have stood out more vividly and boldly had we managed to dispense with these things altogether. I think that the reality to which an artist is drawn as a means of saying what he has to about the world, must—if you will forgive the tautology—be real in itself: in other words understood by a person, familiar to him since his childhood. And the more real a film is in

that sense, the more convincing will be the author's statement.

In *Stalker* only the basic situation could strictly be called fantastic. It was convenient because it helped to delineate the central moral conflict of the film more starkly. But in terms of what actually happens to the characters, there is no element of fantasy. The film was intended to make the audience feel that it was all happening here and now, that the Zone is there beside us.

People have often asked me what the Zone is, and what it symbolises, and have put forward wild conjectures on the subject. I'm reduced to a state of fury and despair by such questions. The Zone doesn't symbolise anything, any more than anything else does in my films: the zone is a zone, it's life, and as he makes his way across it a man may break down or he may come through. Whether he comes through or not depends on his own self-respect, and his capacity to distinguish between what matters and what is merely passing.

I see it as my duty to stimulate reflection on what is essentially human and eternal in each individual soul, and which all too often a person will pass by, even though his fate lies in his hands. He is too busy chasing after phantoms. In the end everything can be reduced to the one simple element which is all a person can count upon in his existence: the capacity to love. That element can grow within the soul to become the supreme factor which determines the meaning of a person's life. My function is to make whoever sees my films aware of his need to love and to give his love, and aware that beauty is summoning him.

CHAPTER VIII

After Nostalgia

Now my first film made outside my own country is behind me. Of course it was made with the official approval of the film authorities, which at the time I took for granted though it irritated the bosses. Subsequent events were to illustrate yet again how disastrously alien my aims and films are to certain official groups in the cinema.

I wanted to make a film about Russian nostalgia—about the particular state of mind which assails Russians who are far from their native land. I wanted the film to be about the fatal attachment of Russians to their national roots, their past, their culture, their native places, their families and friends; an attachment which they carry with them all their lives, regardless of where destiny may fling them. Russians are seldom able to adapt easily, to come to terms with a new way of life. The entire history of Russian emigration bears out the Western view that 'Russians are bad emigrants'; everyone knows their tragic incapacity to be assimilated, the clumsy ineptitude of their efforts to adopt an alien life-style. How could I have imagined as I was making *Nostalgia* that the stifling sense of longing that fills the screen space of that film was to become my lot for the rest of my life; that from now until the end of my days I would bear the painful malady within myself?

Working all the time in Italy I made a film that was none the less profoundly Russian in every way: morally and emotionally. It is about a Russian who has been posted to Italy on an extended visit, and his impressions of the country. I wasn't aiming at yet another screen account of the beauties of Italy which amaze the tourists and are sent all over the world in the form of mass-produced postcards. My subject is a Russian who is thoroughly disorientated by the impressions crowding in upon him, and at the same time about his tragic inability to share these impressions with the people closest to him who had not been permitted to accompany him, and the impossibility of grafting his new experience onto the past which has bound him from his very birth. I myself went through something similar when I had been away from home for some time: my encounter with another world and another culture and the beginnings of an attachment to them had set up an irritation, barely perceptible but incurable—rather like unrequited love, like a symptom of the hopelessness of trying to grasp what is boundless, or unite what cannot be joined; a reminder of how finite, how curtailed, our experience on earth must be; like a warning sign of the limitations which predetermine your life, imposed not by outward circumstances (those would be easy enough to deal with!) but by your own inner 'taboo' . . .

I am always lost in admiration for those mediaeval Japanese artists who worked in the court of their Shogun until they had achieved recognition, and then, at the peak of their fame, would change their entire lives by going off in secret to a new place to start working again under a different name and in another style. Some are known to have lived up to five distinct lives. That is freedom!

Gorchakov, the protagonist of *Nostalgia,* is a poet. He comes to Italy to collect material on the Russian serf composer, Beryózovsky,[26] on whose life he is basing an opera libretto. Beryózovsky is an historical figure. He showed such musical ability that he was sent by his landowner to study in Italy, where he stayed many years, gave concerts and was much acclaimed. But in the end, driven no doubt by that same inescapable Russian nostalgia, he eventually decided to return to serf-owning Russia, where, shortly afterwards, he hanged himself. Of course the composer's story is put into the film deliberately as a kind of paraphrase of Gorchakov's own situation, of the state in which we see him, acutely aware of being an outsider who can only watch other people's lives from a distance, crushed by the recollections of his past, by the faces of those dear to him, which assail his memory together with the sounds and smells of home.

I have to say that when I first saw all the material shot for the film I was startled to find it was a spectacle of unrelieved gloom. The material was completely homogeneous, both in its mood and in the state of mind imprinted in it. This was not something I had set out to achieve; what was symptomatic and unique about the phenomenon before me was the fact that, irrespective of my own specific theoretical intentions, the camera was obeying first and foremost my inner state during filming: I had been worn down by my separation from my family and from the way of life 1 was used to, by working under quite unfamiliar conditions, even by using a foreign language. I was at once astounded and delighted, because what had been imprinted on the film, and was now revealed to me for the first time

in the darkness of the cinema, proved that my reflections about how the art of the screen is able, and even called, to become a matrix of the individual soul, to convey unique human experience, were not just the fruit of idle speculation but a reality, which here was unrolling incontrovertibly before my eyes . . .

But to return to when *Nostalgia* was first conceived and started . . .

I was not interested in the development of the plot, in the chain of events—with each film I feel less and less need for them. I have always been interested in a person's inner world, and for me it was far more natural to make a journey into the psychology that informed the hero's attitude to life, into the literary and cultural traditions that are the foundation of his spiritual world. I am well aware that from a commercial point of view it would be far more advantageous to move from place to place, to introduce shots from one ingenious angle after another, to use exotic landscapes and impressive interiors. But for what I am essentially trying to do, outward effects simply distance and blur the goal which I am pursuing. 1 am interested in man, for he contains a universe within himself; and in order to find expression for the idea, for the meaning of human life, there is no need to spread behind it, as it were, a canvas crowded with happenings.

It would perhaps be superfluous to mention that from the very start cinema as American-style adventure movie has never held any interest for me. The last thing I want to do is devise attractions. From *Ivan's Childhood* to *Stalker,* I have always tried to avoid outward movement, and have tried to concentrate the action within the classical unities. In this respect even the structure of *Audrey Rublyov* strikes me today as disjointed and incoherent . . .

Ultimately I wanted *Nostalgia* to be free of anything irrelevant or incidental that would stand in the way of my principal objective: the portrayal of someone in a state of profound alienation from the world and himself, unable to find a balance between reality and the harmony for which he longs, in a state of *nostalgia* provoked not only by his remoteness from home but also by a global yearning for the wholeness of existence. I was not satisfied with the scenario until it came together at last into a kind of metaphysical whole.

Italy comes into Gorehakov's consciousness at the moment of his tragic conflict with reality (not merely with the conditions of life, but with life itself, which never satisfies the claims made on it by the individual) and stretches out above him in magnificent ruins

Nostalgia
The two women.

which seem to rise up out of nothing. These fragments of a civilisation at once universal and alien, are like an epitaph to the futility of human endeavour, a sign that mankind has taken a path that can only lead to destruction. Gorchakov dies unable to overcome his own spiritual crisis, to put right this time which—evidently for him too—is out of joint.

The character of Domenico, at first sight irrelevant, has a particular bearing on the hero's state of mind. This frightened, defenseless man finds in himself the strength and nobility of spirit to manifest his own understanding of the meaning of life. Once a mathematics teacher and now an 'outsider', undeterred by his lack of status, he decides to speak out about the catastrophic state of today's world. In the eyes of normal people he simply appears mad, but Gorchakov responds to his idea—born of deep suffering—of individual responsibility for all that is going on in the world, of each being guilty before everyone for everything.

In one form or another all my films have made the point that people are not alone and abandoned in an empty universe, but arc linked by countless threads with the past and the future; that as each person lives his life he forges a bond with the whole history of mankind. . . . But the hope that each separate life and every human action has intrinsic meaning makes the responsibility of the individual for the overall course of human life incalculably greater.

In a world where there is a real threat of a war capable of annihilating mankind; where social ills exist on a staggering scale; where human suffering cries out to heaven—the way must be found

for one person to reach another. Such is the sacred duty of humanity towards its own future, and the personal duty of each individual. Gorchakov becomes attached to Domenico because he feels a deep need to protect him from the 'public' opinion of the well-fed, contented, blind majority for whom he is simply a grotesque lunatic. Even so, Gorchakov is not able to save Domenico from the role he has implacably assigned himself—without asking life to let the cup pass him by . . .

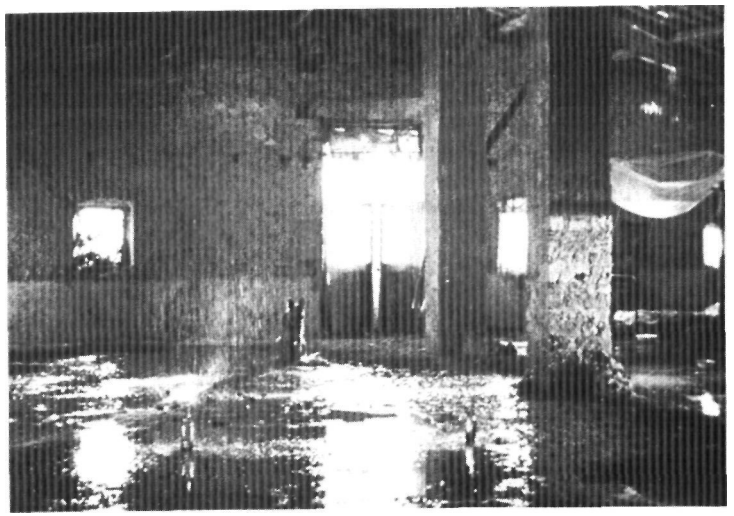
Gorchakov is amazed, and won over, by Domenico's childlike maximalism, for he himself, like all adults, is to some extent a conformist. But Domenico makes up his mind to burn himself alive in the crazy hope that this final, monstrous publicity act will bring home to people that his concern is for them, and make them listen to his last cry of warning. Gorchakov is affected by the total integrity, almost holiness, of the man and his action. While Gorchakov merely reflects on how much he minds about the world's imperfections, Domenico takes it upon himself to do something about it, and his commitment is total: his final act makes it clear that there was never any element of abstraction in Domenico's sense of responsibility. By comparison, Gorchakov's agonising over his own lack of constancy can only appear banal. It is of course arguable that he is vindicated by his death, since it reveals how deeply he has been tortured.

I said that I was startled to find how accurately my own mood while making the film was transferred onto the screen; a profound and increasingly wearing sense of bereavement, away from home and loved ones, filling every moment of existence. To this inexorable, insidious awareness of your own dependence on your past, like an illness that grows ever harder to bear, I gave the name 'Nostalgia'. . . . All the same I should advise the reader that it would be simplistic to identify the author with his lyric hero. We naturally use our immediate impressions of life in our work, since these, alas, are the only ones at our disposal. But even when we borrow moods and plots directly from our own lives, it still hardly ever means that the author should be forcibly linked with his characters. It may be a disappointment to some to realise that an author's lyrical experience seldom coincides with what he actually does in real life . . .

An author's poetic principle emerges from the effect made upon him by surrounding reality, and it can rise above that reality, question it, engage in bitter conflict; and, moreover, not only with the reality that lies outside him, but also with the one that is within him. Dostoievsky discovered yawning abysses within himself and that his saintly characters and his villains are equally projections of him. But not one of them is completely him. Each of his characters epitomises what he sees and thinks of life, but not one could be said to embody the full diapason of his personality.

In *Nostalgia* I wanted to pursue the theme of the 'weak' man who is no fighter in terms of his outward attributes but whom I none the less see as a victor in this life. Stalker delivers a monologue in defence of that weakness that is the true price and hope of life. I have always liked people who can't adapt themselves to life pragmatically. There have never been any heroes in my films, but there have always been people whose strength lies in their spiritual conviction and who take upon themselves a responsibility for others. Such people are often rather like children, only with the motivation of adults; from a common-sense point of view their position is unrealistic as well as selfless.

The monk, Rublyov, looked at the world with unprotected, childlike eyes, and preached love, goodness and non-resistance to evil. And though he found himself witnessing the most brutal and devastating forms of violence, which seemed to hold sway in the world and led him to bitter disillusionment, he came back in the end to that same truth, rediscovered for himself, about the value of human goodness, of openhearted love which docs not count the cost, the one real gift which people can give each other. Kelvin, who seemed at first to be



Nostalgia
Domenico's house.

a limited, run-of-the-mill character, turns out to be possessed of deeply human feelings which render him organically incapable of disobeying the voice of his own conscience, and shirking the grave burden of responsibility for his own and others' lives. The hero of *Mirror* was a weak, selfish man incapable of loving even those dearest to him for their sake alone, looking for nothing in return—he is only justified by the torment of soul which assails him towards the end of his days as he realises that he has no means of repaying the debt he owes to life. Stalker, eccentric and on occasion hysterical, is also incorruptible, and states unequivocally his own spiritual commitment in the face of a world in which opportunism grows like a malignant tumour. Like Stalker, Domenico works out his own answer, chooses his own way of martyrdom, rather than give in to the accepted, cynical pursuit of personal material privilege, in an attempt to block, by his own exertions, by the example of his own sacrifice, the path down which mankind is rushing insanely towards its own destruction. Nothing is more important than conscience, which keeps watch and forbids a man to grab what he wants from life and then lie back, fat and contented.; Traditionally, the best of the Russian intelligentsia were guided by conscience, incapable of self-complacence, moved by compassion for the deprived of this world, and dedicated in their search for faith, for the ideal, for good; and all these things I wanted

to emphasise in the personality of Gorchakov.

I am drawn to the man who is ready to serve a higher cause, unwilling—or even unable—to subscribe to the generally accepted tenets of a worldly 'morality'; the man who recognises that the meaning of existence lies above all in the fight against the evil within ourselves, so that in the course of a lifetime he may take at least one step towards spiritual perfection. For the only alternative to that way is, alas, the one that leads to spiritual degeneration; and our everyday existence and the general pressure to conform makes it all too easy to take the latter path . . .

The central character of my latest film, *Sacrifice*, is also a weak man in the generally accepted sense of the word. He is no hero, but he is a thinker and an honest man, who turns out to be capable of sacrifice in the name of a higher ideal. He rises to the occasion, without attempting to shed his responsibility or trying to foist it onto anyone else. He is in danger of not being understood, for his decisive, just action is such that to those around him it can only appear catastrophically destructive: that is the tragic conflict of his role. He nevertheless takes the crucial step, thereby infringing the rules of normal behaviour and laying himself open to the charge of folly, because he is conscious of his link with ultimate reality, with what could be termed world destiny. In all this he is merely obeying his vocation as he feels it in his heart—he is not master of his fate but its servant; and it may well be that through individual exertions such as his, which nobody notices or understands, world harmony is preserved.

The human weakness which I find attractive does not allow for individual expansionism, for the assertion of the personality at the expense of others or of life itself, nor the urge to harness another person to the realisation of the individual's own aims and fulfilment. In fact I am fascinated by the capacity of a human being to make a stand against the forces which drive his fellows into the rat race, into the rut of practicalities: and this phenomenon contains the material of more and more of my ideas for new works.

It is the basis, too, of my interest in *Hamlet*, of which I hope to make a film sooner or later. This greatest of dramas sets out the eternal problem of the man who is of higher moral stature than his peers, but whose actions necessarily affect and are affected by the ignoble real world. It is as if a man of the future were forced to live in the past. And Hamlet's tragedy, as I see it, lies not in his death

My dear Pyotr Nikolayevich,

I have been in Italy for two years now, and these two years have been very significant, both for my work as a composer and in my personal life.

Last night I had a strange nightmare. I was producing an important opera, to be performed in the theatre of my master, the Count. The first act took place in a great park filled with statues, and these were played by nude men made up with white paint, who were obliged to stand for a long time without moving. I too was acting the part of one of these statues, and I knew that were I to move a fearful punishment awaited me, for my lord and master was there in person, watching us. I could feel the cold rising through my feet, and yet I did not move. At last, just as I felt that I had no strength left, I woke up. I was filled with fear, for I knew that this was no dream, but reality itself.

I could try to ensure that I never return to Russia, but the very thought is like death. It surely cannot be that for as long as I live I shall never again see the land where I was born: the birches and sky of my childhood.

Fond greetings from your poor, abandoned friend,

Pavel Sosnovskv.

but in the fact that before he dies he is obliged to renounce his own quest for perfection and become an ordinary murderer. After that, death can only be a welcome way out—otherwise he would have had to kill himself . . . |

As to my next film, 1 shall aim at ever greater sincerity and conviction in each shot, using the immediate impressions made upon me by nature, in which time will have left its own trace. Nature exists in cinema in the naturalistic fidelity with which it is recorded; the greater the fidelity, the more we trust nature as we see it in the frame, and at the same time, the finer is the created image: in its authentically natural likeness, the inspiration of nature itself is brought into cinema.

Of late I have frequently found myself addressing audiences, and I have noticed that whenever I declare that there are no symbols or metaphors in my films, those present express incredulity. They persist in asking again and again, for instance, what rain signifies in my films; why does it figure in film after film; and why the repeated images of wind, fire, water? I really don't know how to deal with such questions.

Rain is after all typical of the landscape in which I grew up; in Russia you have those long, dreary, persistent rains. And I can say that I love nature—I don't like big cities and feel perfectly happy when I'm away from the paraphernalia of modern civilisation, just as I felt wonderful in Russia when I was in my country house, with three hundred kilometres between Moscow and myself. Rain, fire, water, snow, dew, the driving ground wind—all are part of the material setting in which we dwell; I would even say of the truth of our lives. I am therefore puzzled when I am told that people cannot simply enjoy watching nature, when it is lovingly reproduced on the screen, but have to look for some hidden meaning. Of course rain can just be seen as bad weather, whereas I use it to create a particular aesthetic setting in which to steep the action of the film. But that is not at all the same thing as bringing nature into my films as a symbol of something else—Heaven forbid! In commercial cinema nature often does not exist at all; all one has is the most advantageous lighting and exteriors for the purpose of quick shooting—everybody follows the plot and no one is bothered by the artificiality of a setting that is more or less right, nor by the disregard for detail and atmosphere. When the screen brings the real world to the audience, the world as it actually is, so that it can be seen in depth and from all sides, evoking its very smell, allowing audiences to feel on their skin its moisture or its dryness—it seems that the cinema-goer has so lost the capacity simply to surrender to an immediate, emotional aesthetic impression, that he instantly has to check himself, and ask: 'Why? What for? What's the point?'

The answer is that I want to create my own world on the screen, in its ideal and most perfect form, as I myself feel it and see it. I am not trying to be coy with my audience, or to conceal some secret intention of my own: I am recreating my world in those details which seem to me most fully and exactly to express the elusive meaning of our existence.

Let me clarify what I mean with a reference to Bergman: in *The Virgin Spring* I have always been stunned by one shot of the dying heroine, the girl who has been monstrously raped. The spring sun is shining through the trees, and through the branches we see her face—she may be dying or she may be already dead, but in any case she clearly no longer feels pain. . . . Our foreboding seems to hang in the air, suspended like a sound. . . . All seems clear enough and yet we feel a hiatus. . . . There's something missing. . . . Snow starts to fall, freak spring snow . . . which is the piercing scintilla we needed to bring our feelings to a kind of consummation: we gasp, transfixed. The snow catches on her eyelashes and stays there: again, time is leaving its tracks in the shot. . . . But how, by what right, could one talk about the meaning of that falling snow, even though within the span and rhythm of the shot it is the thing that brings our emotional awareness to a climax? Of course one can't. All we know is that this scene is the form the artist found to convey precisely what happened. On no account must artistic purpose be confused with ideology, or we shall lose the means of perceiving art immediately and exactly with the whole of our being . . .

I would concede that the final shot *of Nostalgia* has an element of metaphor, when I bring the Russian house inside the Italian cathedral. It is a constructed image which smacks of literariness: a model of the hero's state, of the division within him which prevents him from living as he has up till now. Or perhaps, on the contrary, it is his new wholeness in which the Tuscan hills and the Russian countryside come together indissolubly; he is conscious of them as inherently his own, merged into his being and his blood. And so Gorchakov dies in this new world where those things come together naturally and of themselves which in our strange and relative

Sight grows dim—my power,
Two invisible diamond shafts;
Hearing fails, full of long ago thunder
And the breath of my father's house;
Tough knots of muscle sag
Like grey oxen on the plough-field;
And behind my shoulders at night
No longer shine two wings.

I'm a candle burnt out at the feast.
Gather my wax up at dawn,
And this page will tell you the secret
Of how to weep and where to be proud,
How to distribute the final third
Of delight, and make an easy death,
Then, sheltered by some chance roof
To blaze, word-like, with posthumous light.

Arseniy Tarkovsky
(Translated by Kitty Hunter-Blair)

earthly existence have for some reason, or by someone, been divided once and for all. All the same, even if the scene lacks cinematic purity, I trust that it is free of vulgar symbolism; the conclusion seems to me fairly complex in form and meaning, and to be a figurative expression of what is happening to the hero, not a symbol of something outside him which has to be deciphered .

Clearly I could be accused of being inconsistent. However, it is for the artist both to devise principles and to break them. It's unlikely that there are many works of art that embody precisely the aesthetic doctrine preached by the artist. As a rule a work of art develops in complex interaction with the artist's theoretical ideas, which cannot encompass it completely; artistic texture is always richer than anything that can be fitted into a theoretical schema.

And now that I have written this book I begin to wonder if my own rules are not becoming a constraint.

Nostalgia is now behind me. It could never have occurred to me when I started shooting that my own, all too specific, nostalgia was soon to take possession of my soul for ever.

CHAPTERIX

The Sacrifice

The idea of *The Sacrifice* came to me long before I thought of *Nostalgia.* The first notes and sketches, the first frenzied lines, date back to the time when I still lived in the Soviet Union. The focal point was to be the story of how the hero, Alexander, was to be cured of a fatal disease as a result of a night spent in bed with a witch. Ever since those early days and all through the time I was working on the screenplay, I was constantly preoccupied with the idea of equilibrium, of sacrifice, of the sacrificial act, the *yin* and *yang* of love and personality. It became part of my very being, and all I have experienced since living in the West has only served to make that preoccupation the more intense. I have to say that my basic convictions have not changed since I arrived here: they have developed, deepened, become firmer; there have been changes of interval, or proportion. So, too, as the plan of my film gradually evolved, it kept changing shape, but I hope that its central idea remains intact.

What moved me was the theme of the harmony which is born only of sacrifice, the twofold dependence of love. It's not a question of mutual love: what nobody seems to understand is that love can only be one-sided, that no other love exists, that in any other form it is not love. If it involves less than total giving, it is not love. It is impotent; for the moment, it is nothing.

I am interested above all in the character who is capable of sacrificing himself and his way of life—regardless of whether that sacrifice is made in the name of spiritual values, or for the sake of someone else, or of his own salvation, or of all these things together. Such behaviour precludes, by its very nature, all of those selfish interests that make up a 'normal' rationale for action; it refutes the laws of a materialistic world view. It is often absurd and unpractical. And yet—or indeed for that very reason—the man who acts in that way brings about fundamental changes to people's lives and to the course of history. The space he lives in becomes a rare, distinctive point of contrast to the empirical concepts of our experience, an area where reality is all the more strongly present.

Little by little that awareness led me to carry out my wish to make a feature film about a man whose dependence upon others

brings him to independence, and for whom love is at once ultimate thrall and ultimate freedom. And the more clearly I discerned the stamp of materialism on the face of our planet (irrespective of whether I was observing the West or the East), the more I came up against unhappy people, saw the victims of psychoses symptomatic of an inability or unwillingness to see why life had lost all delight and all value, why it had become oppressive, the more committed I felt to this film as the most important thing in my life. It seems to me that the individual stands today at a crossroads, faced with the choice of whether to pursue the existence of a blind consumer, subject to the implacable march of new technology and the endless multiplication of material goods, or whether to seek out a way that will lead to spiritual responsibility, which ultimately might mean not only his personal salvation but also the saving of society at large: in other words, to turn to God. He has to solve this dilemma for himself, for only he can discover his own sane spiritual life. Solving it may take him closer to the state in which he can be responsible for society. That is the step which becomes a sacrifice, in the Christian sense of self-sacrifice.

Again we are reminded of the dictum that our life here on earth was made for happiness, and that nothing else is more important for man. And though this could only be true if one were to alter the meaning of the word happiness—which is impossible—neither in the West nor the East (I am not referring to the Far East) will a dissenting voice be taken seriously by the materialistic majority.

If we feel inexplicable symptoms of anxiety, depression or despair, we promptly turn to the services of the psychiatrist or, better still, the sexologist, who has taken over from the confessor, and who, we imagine, eases our minds and restores them to normality. Reassured, we pay him the going rate. Or if we feel the need for love, we go off to a brothel and again pay cash—not that it necessarily has to be a brothel. And all this despite the fact that we know perfectly well that neither love nor peace of mind can be bought with any currency.

The Sacrifice is a parable. The significant events it contains can be interpreted in more than one way. The first version was to be entitled *The Witch*, and was to tell the story of the hero's amazing cure from cancer; his family doctor has told him the fearful truth that his end is inevitable, his days numbered. On one of those last days, the doorbell rings. Alexander opens the door and is con-

fronted by the soothsayer, a forerunner of Otto in the final version, who gives Alexander a strange, not to say absurd, instruction: he is to make his way to a woman reputed to be a witch and possessed of magical powers, and to spend the night with her. The sick man obeys since it is his only way out, and through God's mercy he is cured. This is confirmed by the astonished doctor. And then, one wretched, stormy night, the witch was to appear at Alexander's house, and at her bidding he was to leave his splendid mansion and respected life happily and go off with her, with nothing but the old coat on his back.

The overall effect of these events was to be not only a parable about sacrifice, but also the story of how one individual is saved. And what I hope is that Alexander—like the hero of the film finally made in Sweden in 1985—is healed in a more significant sense; it is not only a question of being cured of a physical (and, moreover, fatal) disease; it is also a spiritual regeneration expressed in the image of a woman.

Curiously, while the images of the film were being conceived, and indeed all the time the first version of the scenario was being written, regardless of the current circumstances of my life, the characters began to stand out more and more clearly, the action grew steadily more specific and structured. It was almost an independent process that entered my life of itself. Furthermore, while I was still making *Nostalgia* I could not escape the feeling that the film was influencing my life. In the *Nostalgia* scenario, Gorchakov had only come to Italy for a short time, but he fell ill and died. In other words, he failed to return to Russia not of his own volition, but by a dictate of fate. Nor did I imagine that after finishing *Nostalgia* I would remain in Italy; like Gorchakov, I am subject to a Higher Will. Another sad fact came to underline these thoughts: the death of Anatoliy Solonitsyn, who had played the lead in all my previous films and who, I assumed, would have the parts of Gorchakov in *Nostalgia* and of Alexander in *The Sacrifice*. He died of the illness of which Alexander was cured, and which a year later was to afflict me.

I don't know what this means. I only know that it is very frightening, and I have no doubt that the poetry of the film is going to become a specific reality, that the truth it touches will materialise, will make itself known and, whether I like it or not, will affect my life. There can be no question of a person's remaining passive

once he has grasped truths of that order; for they come to him without his willing it, and overturn all his earlier ideas about how the world is. In a very real sense he is divided, aware of being answerable for others; he is an instrument, a medium, obliged to live and to act for the sake of other people.

Thus Alexander Pushkin considered that every poet (and I have always seen myself as a poet rather than as a cinematographer), every true artist—regardless of whether he wants to be or not—is a prophet. Pushkin saw the capacity to look into time and predict the future as a terrible gift, and his allotted role caused him untold torment. He had a superstitious regard for signs and portents: we only have to recall how, when he was dashing from Pskov to Petersburg at the moment of the Decembrist rising, he turned back because a hare had run across his path; he accepted the popular belief that this was an omen. In one of his poems he wrote about the torture he endured through being conscious of his gift of prescience, and of the burden of being called to be poet and prophet. I had forgotten his words, but the poem came back to me with new significance, almost like a revelation. I feel that the pen which wrote those lines in 1826 was not held by Alexander Pushkin alone:

Weary from hunger of spirit
Through grim wasteland I dragged my way,
And a six-winged seraph came to me
At a place where two paths crossed.
With finger-tips as light as sleep
He touched the pupils of my eyes,
And my mantic pupils opened
Like eyes of an eagle scared.
As his fingers touched my ears
They were filled with roar and clang:
And I heard the shuddering of the sky,
And angels' mountain flight,
And sea beasts moving in the deep,
And growth of valley vine.
And he pressed against my mouth,
And out he plucked my sinful tongue,
And all its guile and empty words,
And taking a wise serpent's tongue

He thrust it in my frozen mouth
With his incarnadine right hand.
And with his sword he cleft my breast,
And out he plucked my trembling heart,
And in my gaping breast he placed
A coal alive with flames.
Like a corpse I lay in the wasteland,
And I heard God's voice cry out:
'Arise, prophet, and see and hear,
Be charged with my will—
And go out over seas and lands
To fire men's hearts with the word.'

The Sacrifice is in the same vein, fundamentally, as my earlier films, but with the difference that I have deliberately laid poetic emphasis on the dramatic development. In a sense, my recent films have been impressionistic in structure: the episodes, with rare exceptions, have been taken from everyday life, and therefore come across to the audience in their totality. Working on my latest film, I aimed not merely at developing the episodes in the light of my own experience and of the rules of dramatic structure, but at building the picture into a poetic whole in which all the episodes are harmoniously linked: something which, in preceding films, concerned me much less. As a result, the overall structure of *'The Sacrifice* became more complex, and took on the form of a poetic parable. In *Nostalgia* dramatic development is almost entirely lacking, apart from the quarrel with Evgenia, the self-immolation of Domenico and Gorchakov's three attempts to carry the candle across the pool. In *'The Sacrifice,* by contrast, conflict between the characters builds up to a flash-point. Both Domenico and Alexander are ready to act, and the source of their willingness to do so lies in their foreboding of imminent change. Both carry the mark of sacrifice, and each makes an offering of himself. The difference is that Domenico's act produces no tangible results.

Alexander, an actor who has given up the stage, is perpetually crushed by depression. Everything fills him with weariness: the pressures of change, the discord in his family, and his instinctive sense of the threat posed by the relentless march of technology. He has grown to hate the emptiness of human speech, from which he flees into a silence where he hopes to find some measure of truth.

Alexander offers the audience the possibility of participating in his act of sacrifice, and of being touched by its results. (Not, I hope, in the sense of that 'audience participation' which is all too current among directors in both the USSR and the USA—and therefore also in Europe—and has become one of the two main trends of current cinema: the other being the so-called 'poetic cinema' where everything is deliberately made incomprehensible and the director has to think up explanations for what he has done.)

The metaphor of the film is consistent with the action, and needs no elucidation. I knew that the film would be open to a number of interpretations, but I deliberately avoided pointing to specific conclusions because I considered that those were for the audience to reach independently. Indeed, it was my intention to invite different responses. I naturally have my own views on the film but I think that the person who sees it will be able to interpret the events it portrays and make up his own mind both about the various threads that run through it, and about its contradictions.

Alexander turns to God in prayer. Afterwards he resolves to break with his life as it has been until now; he burns all the bridges behind him, leaving not a single path by which to return, destroying his home, parting from the son whom he loves beyond all measure, and he falls silent as a final comment on the devaluation of words in the modern world. It may be that some religious people will see in his actions following the prayer God's answer to the question put by man: 'What must be done to avert nuclear disaster?'—namely, turn to God. It may be that some who have a heightened sense of the supernatural will see the meeting with the witch, Maria, as the central scene which explains all that happens subsequently. There will doubtless be others for whom all the events of the film are merely the fruits of a sick imagination—since no nuclear war is actually happening.

None of these reactions has anything to do with the reality shown in the film. The first and last scenes—the watering of the barren tree, which for me is a symbol of faith—are the high points between which events unfold with growing intensity. By the end of the film no>t only does Alexander prove his case and demonstrate that he is able to rise to extraordinary heights, but the doctor, who first appears as a simplistic character, bursting with health and utterly devoted to Alexander's family, changes to such an extent that he is able to sense and understand the venomous atmosphere

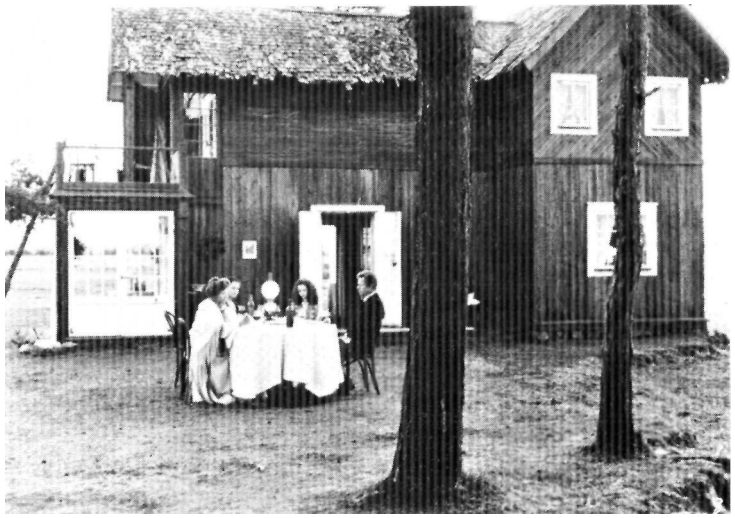
prevailing in the household and its deadly effect. He turns out to be capable not merely of expressing an opinion of his own but of deciding to break with what has grown hateful to him, and emigrate to Australia.

As a result of what happens, a new closeness grows up between Adelaide, Alexander's eccentric wife, and the maid Julia; such a human relationship is something completely new for Adelaide. For almost the entire film her function is unrelievedly tragic: she stifles anything confronting her that has the slightest aspiration to individuality, to the affirmation of personality; she crushes everything and everyone, including her husband—without for a moment wanting to do so. She is barely capable of reflection. She suffers from her own lack of spirituality, but at the same time it is that suffering that gives her her destructive power—as uncontrollable in its effect as a nuclear explosion. She is one of the causes of Alexander's tragedy. Her interest in other people is in inverse proportion to her aggressive instincts, to her passion for self-assertion. Her capacity for apprehending the truth is too limited to allow her to understand another world, the world of other people. Moreover, even if she were to see that world, she would be unable and unwilling to enter it.

Maria is the antithesis of Adelaide: modest, timid, perpetually uncertain of herself. At the beginning of the film anything like friendship between her and the master of the house would be unthinkable—the differences that separate them are too great. But one night they come together, and that night is the turning-point in Alexander's life. In the face of imminent catastrophe he perceives the love of this simple woman as a gift from God, as a justification for his entire life. The miracle that overtakes Alexander transfigures him.

It was far from easy to find protagonists for the eight parts, but I think that each member of the final cast completely identified with his or her character and actions.

We had no technical or other problems during shooting, until one moment almost at the end, when all our efforts seemed on the point of coming to nothing. Suddenly, in the scene where Alexander sets fire to his house—a single take lasting six and a half minutes—the camera broke down. We only discovered it when the entire building—our set—was already blazing, burning to the ground as we looked on. We couldn't put the fire out, nor could we



Ire Sacrifice
Adelaide stifles all individuality and spirituality around her.

take a single shot: four expensive months of intense hard work for nothing.

And then, in a matter of days, a new house was built, identical to the first. It seemed like a miracle, and proved what people can do when they are driven by conviction—and not just people, but the producers themselves.

As we shot that scene for the second time, we were filled with apprehension until both cameras had been turned off—one by the assistant camera-man, the other by the intensely anxious Sven Nykvist, that brilliant master of light. Then we all let go: we were nearly all weeping like children, and as we fell into each other's arms I realised how close and indissoluble was the bond that united our team.

Perhaps other scenes—the dream sequences or the barren tree—are more significant from a certain psychological point of view than the one where Alexander burns down his house in grim fulfilment of his vow. But from the start I was determined to concentrate the feelings of the audience on the behaviour, at first sight utterly senseless, of someone who considers worthless—and therefore actually sinful—everything that is not a necessity of life.

I wanted those who saw it to be directly affected by Alexander's state, to experience his new life passing through the distorted time

The Sacrifice
The long fire scene conveys distorted time sense of Alexander's new life.

of his perception. That may be why the fire scene lasts a full six minutes, the longest scene in the history of cinema; but, as I say, it could not have been done any other way.

'In the beginning was the Word, but you're as silent as a dumb salmon,' says Alexander to his son early in the film. The boy is recovering from a throat operation and is not allowed to talk. He listens in silence as his father tells him the story of the barren tree. Later, horrified at the news of impending disaster, Alexander himself takes a vow of silence: . . . I shall be mute, I shall never utter another word to anyone, I shall give up everything that ties me to my life. Lord, help me to fulfil this vow.'

God hears Alexander's prayer, and the consequences are at once terrible and joyful. On the one hand, the practical result is that Alexander breaks irrevocably with the world and with its laws, which until now he has taken to be his own. In doing so, he not only loses his family, but also—and for those around him this is the most frightening thing of all—he puts himself outside all accepted norms. And yet, that is precisely why I see Alexander as a man chosen by God. He can sense the danger, the destructive force driving the machinery of modern society as it heads towards the abyss. And the mask must be snatched away if humanity is to be saved.

To some degree, some of the other participants can also be seen

as chosen and called by God. Otto, with his gift of prognostication, is a collector, as he says, of inexplicable and mysterious happenings. No one knows about his past, nor how or when he came to the village where so many strange things take place.

For Alexander's little son, as for the witch, Maria, the world is filled with unfathomable wonders, for they both move in a world of the imagination, not that of 'reality'. Unlike empiricists and pragmatists, they do not believe merely in what they can touch; but with the mind's eye they perceive the truth. Nothing that they do complies with the 'normal' criteria of behaviour. They arc possessed of the gift that was recognised in old Russia as the mark of the 'holy fool': those pilgrims or ragged beggars whose very presence affected people living normal lives, and whose soothsaying and self-negation were always at variance with the ideas and established rules of the world at large.

Today, civilised society, the great mass of which has no faith, is entirely positivist in outlook, but even the positivists fail to notice the absurdity of the Marxist thesis that the universe exists for ever while the earth is merely fortuitous. Contemporary man is unable to hope for the unexpected, for anomalous events that don't correspond with 'normal' logic: still less is he prepared to allow even the thought of unprogrammed phenomena, let alone believe in their supranatural significance. The spiritual emptiness that results should be enough to give him pause for thought. First, however, he has to understand that his life's path is not measured by a human yardstick, but lies in the hands of the Creator, on whose will he must rely.

One of the great tragedies of the modern world is the fact that moral problems and ethical interrelationships are not in fashion; they have receded into the background and command little attention. A great many producers eschew *auteur* films because they see cinema not as art but as a means of making money: the celluloid strip becomes a commodity.

In that sense *The Sacrifice* is, amongst other things, a repudiation of commercial cinema. My film is not intended to support or refute particular ideas, or to make a case for this or that way of life. What I wanted was to pose questions and demonstrate problems that go to the very heart of our lives, and thus to bring the audience back to the dormant, parched sources of our existence. Pictures, visual images, are far better able to achieve that end than any words, particularly now, when the word has lost all mystery and magic and speech has become mere chatter, empty of meaning, as Alexander observes. We are being stifled by a surfeit of information, yet at the same time our feelings remain untouched by the supremely important messages that could change our lives.

There is a division in our world between good and evil, between spirituality and pragmatism. Our human world is constructed, modelled, according to material laws, for man has given his society the forms of dead matter, and taken its laws upon himself. Therefore he does not believe in spirit and repudiates God. He feeds on bread alone. How can he see spirit, miracle, God, if from his standpoint they have no place in the structure, if they are redundant. And yet, there occur sudden miraculous happenings even within the empirical order: in physics for example. And, as we know, the great majority of outstanding contemporary physicists do, for some reason, believe in God.

I once talked to the late Soviet physicist Landau on this subject. The setting was a shingle beach in the Crimea.

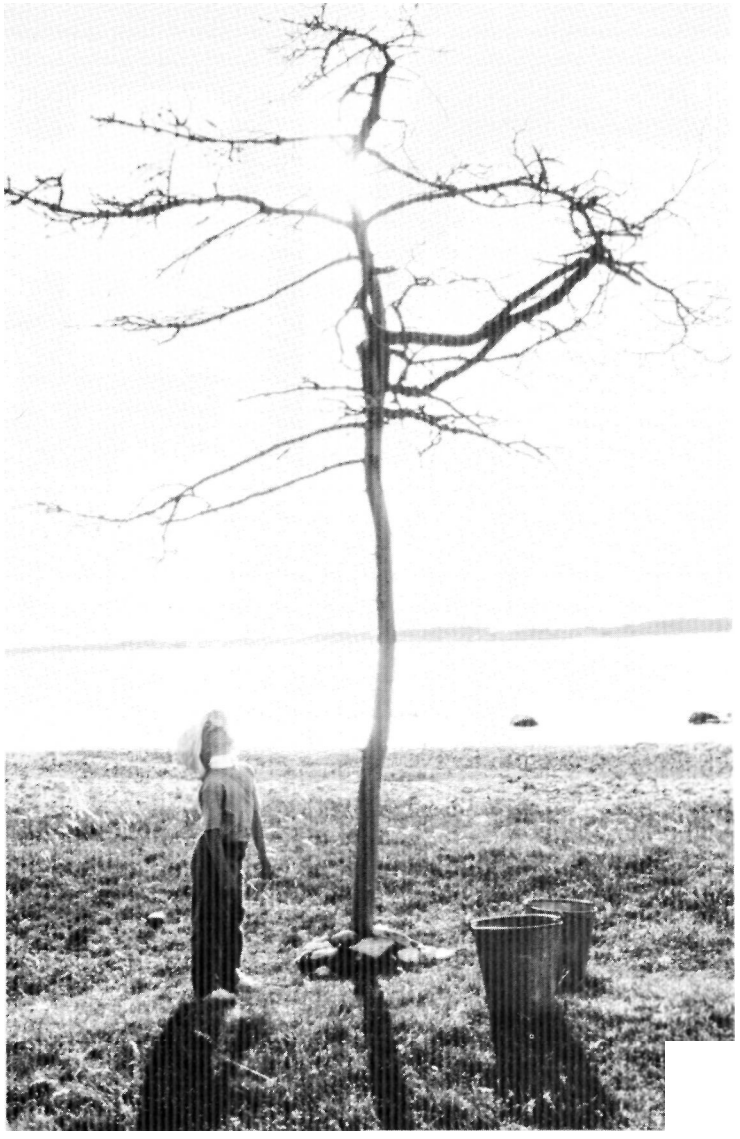
'What do you think,' I asked, 'does God exist or not?'

There followed a pause of some three minutes. Then he looked at me helplessly.

'I think so.'

At the time I was simply a sunburnt young boy, entirely unknown, son of the distinguished poet Arseniy Tarkovsky: a nobody, merely a son. It was the first and last time I saw Landau, a single, chance meeting; hence such candour on the part of the Soviet Nobel Prize winner.

Has man any hope of survival in the face of all the patent signs of impending apocalyptic silence? Perhaps an answer to that question is to be found in the legend of the endurance of the parched tree, deprived of the water of life, on which I based this film, and which has such a crucial place in my artistic biography. The monk, step by step and bucket by bucket, carried water up the hill to water the dry tree, believing implicitly that his act was necessary, and never for an instant wavering in his belief in the miraculous power of his own faith in God. He lived to see the Miracle: one morning the tree burst into life, its branches covered with young leaves. And that 'miracle' is surely no more than the truth.



The Sacrifice
'Little Man waters the tree his father planted, patiently awaiting the Miracle which is no more than the truth.

Conclusion

This book has been in the making for several years. Looking back today over the ground it covers, I feel the need to point towards some conclusions. I can see that the book lacks the unity it might have had if it had been written all at one go, but on the other hand it has some importance for me as a record of the questions with which I first came into cinema: the long-suffering readers of this volume have now witnessed the development of these ideas up to the present time.

Today it seems to me far more important to talk not so much about art in general or the function of cinema in particular, as about life itself; for the artist who is not conscious of its meaning is unlikely to be capable of making any coherent statement in the language of his own art. I have therefore decided to complete this book with some brief reflections on the problems of our time as they confront me now; on those aspects of them that seem to me fundamental, with a bearing beyond the present moment, to the meaning of our existence.

In order to define my own tasks, not only as an artist but, above all, as a person, I found myself having to look at the general state of our civilisation and the personal responsibility of every individual as participant in the historical process.

It seems to me that our age is the final climax of an entire historical cycle, in which supreme power has been wielded by the 'grand inquisitors', leaders, 'outstanding personalities', who were motivated by the idea of transforming society into a more 'just' and rational organisation. They sought to possess the consciousness of the masses, instilling them with new ideological and social ideas, bidding them reform the organisational structure of life for the sake of the happiness of the majority. Dostoievsky had warned people of the 'grand inquisitors' who presume to take upon themselves the responsibility for other people's happiness. We ourselves have seen how the assertion of class or group interests, accompanied by the invocation of the good of humanity and the 'general welfare', result in flagrant violations of the rights of the individual, who is fatally estranged from society; and how, on the strength of its 'objective',

'scientific' basis in 'historical necessity' this process comes to be mistaken for the basic, subjective reality of people's lives.

Throughout the history of civilisation, the historical process has essentially consisted of the 'right' way, the 'correct' way—a better one every time—conceived in the minds of the ideologues and politicians, being offered to people for the salvation of the world and the improvement of man's position within it. In order to be part of this process of reorganisation, 'the few' had each time to waive their own way of thinking and direct their efforts outside themselves to fit in with the proposed plan of action. Thus involved in dynamic outward activity for the sake of a 'progress' that would save the future and mankind, the individual forgot about all that was specifically, personally, and essentially his own; caught up in the general effort he came to underestimate the significance of his own spiritual nature, and the result has been an ever more irreconcilable conflict between the individual and society. Concerned for the interests of the many, nobody thought of his own in the sense preached by Christ: 'Love your neighbour as yourself That is, love yourself so much that you respect in yourself the supra-personal, divine principle, which forbids you to pursue your acquisitive, selfish interests and tells you to give yourself, without reasoning or talking about it; to love others. This requires a true sense of your own dignity: an acceptance of the objective value and significance of the 'I' at the centre of your life on earth, as it grows in spiritual stature, advancing towards the perfection in which there can be no egocentricity. In the fight for your own soul, fidelity to yourself demands unceasing, single-minded effort. It is so much easier to slip down than it is to rise one iota above your own narrow, opportunist motives. A true spiritual birth is extraordinarily hard to achieve. It is all too easy to fall for the 'fishers of human souls'; to abandon your unique vocation ostensibly in pursuit of loftier and more general goals, and in doing so to by-pass the fact that you are betraying yourself and the life that was given to you for some purpose.

The pattern of social relationships has formed in such a way that it is possible for people to ask nothing of themselves, to feel exempt from all moral duty, and only to make demands of others, of humanity at large. They can invite others to be humble and sacrifice themselves, to accept their role in the building of society, while they themselves take no part in the process and accept no personal responsibility for what is happening in the world. A thousand ways can be found to justify this non-involvement and the fact that they don't want to give up their narrowly selfish interests in order to work for the nobler goal of their true vocation; nobody wants, or can bring himself, to look soberly into himself and accept that he is accountable for his own life and his own soul. On the premise that we are all 'together', in other words that mankind is in the process of constructing some kind of civilisation, we constantly turn away from personal liability and, without realising that we are doing so, shift on to others all responsibility for what happens. As a result, the conflict between the individual and society becomes increasingly desperate, and the wall of estrangement between the person and humanity grows ever higher.

The point is that we live in a society that has been structured by our 'concerted' efforts and not by the efforts of anyone in particular, in which the personality claims its rights of other people rather than of itself. Consequently the individual either becomes the instrument of other people's ideas and ambitions, or else he himself becomes a boss who shapes and uses other people's energies with no regard for the rights of the individual. The idea that everyone is responsible for himself seems to have vanished, to have fallen victim to a misconceived 'common good', in the service of which man acquires the right to be treated with a total lack of responsibility.

From the moment when we entrusted to others the solving of our own problems, the rift between the material and the spiritual has been growing. We live in a world governed by ideas which other people have evolved, and we either have to conform to the standards of these ideas or else alienate ourselves from them and contradict them—a position which becomes more and more hopeless.

A bizarre and grim situation.

I am convinced that the conflict can only be resolved through a true balance between the spiritual and the material. What is meant by 'sacrificing yourself to the general good? Surely it betokens a tragic clash between the personal and the general? If a person's sense of responsibility for the future of society is not based on an inner conviction of the part he has to play, if he merely feels entitled to make use of other people, directing their lives for them and indoctrinating them with the idea of their role in the development of society, then the discord between the individual and society can only become more bitter.

Freedom of will must mean that we have the capacity to assess

social phenomena as well as our relationships with other people; to make a free choice between good and evil. But freedom is inseparable from conscience. And even if it is true that all the ideas developed by the social consciousness are the product of evolution, conscience at least has nothing to do with the historic process. Conscience, both as a sense and as a concept, is *a priori* immanent in man, and shakes the very foundations of the society that has emerged from our ill-conceived civilisation. Conscience works against the stabilisation of this society; its manifestations are often at variance with the advantages—or even the survival—of the species. In terms of biological evolution conscience has no meaning as a category; but for some reason it nevertheless is there, accompanying man throughout his existence and development as a race.

It is obvious to everyone that man's material aggrandisement has not been synchronous with spiritual progress. The point has been reached where we seem to have a fatal incapacity for mastering our material achievements in order to use them for our own good. We have created a civilisation which threatens to annihilate mankind.

In the face of disaster on that global scale, the one issue that has to be raised, it seems to me, is the question of a man's personal responsibility, and his willingness for sacrifice, without which he ceases to be a spiritual being in any real sense.

I mean that spirit of sacrifice which must constitute the essential and natural way of life of potentially every human being: not something to be regarded as a misfortune or punishment imposed from without. I mean the spirit of sacrifice which is expressed in the voluntary service of others, taken on naturally as the only viable form of existence.

And yet in the world today personal relationships are all too often based on the urge to grab as much as possible from the next person as we jealously protect our own interests. The paradox of such a situation is that the more we humiliate our fellow-men, the less satisfied we feel and the greater our isolation becomes. Such is the price of our sin in failing to turn, of our own free choice, to the heroic path of our own human fulfilment, accepting it with our whole heart and will as the one true way and the only thing we desire.

Anything less than such total acceptance will exacerbate the conflict between the individual and society; a man will see society as the agency of a violence done to him.

For the moment we are witnessing the decline of the spiritual

while the material long ago developed into an organism with its own bloodstream, and became the basis of our lives, paralysed and riddled with sclerosis. It is clear to everyone that material progress doesn't in itself make people happy, but all the same we go on fanatically multiplying its 'achievements'. We have reached the point where, as Stalker says, the present has essentially merged with the future, in the sense that it contains all the preconditions for immanent disaster; we recognise this and yet we can do nothing to stop it happening.

The connection between man's behaviour and his destiny has been destroyed; and this tragic breach is the cause of his sense of instability in the modern world. Essentially, of course, what a man does is of cardinal importance; but because he has been conditioned into the belief that nothing depends on him and that his personal experience will not affect the future, he has arrived at the false and deadly assumption that he has no part to play in shaping his own fate.

Our world has seen such a disruption of all that should bind the individual to society that it has become supremely important to restore man's participation in his own future. This requires that man should go back to believing in his soul and in its suffering, and link his own actions with his conscience. He has to accept that his conscience will never be at rest as long as what he does is at variance with what he believes; and recognise this through the pain of his soul as it demands he acknowledge his responsibility and his fault. This precludes self-justification through convenient and easy formulae about the fatal influence of other people—never of ourselves—upon what is happening. I am convinced that any attempt to restore harmony in the world can only rest on the renewal of personal responsibility.

Marx and Engels say somewhere that history chooses for its own development the worst of the existing variants, and this is true enough if one approaches the question from the point of view of our material existence. They reached that conclusion at a time when history had squeezed out the last few drops of idealism, when man as a spiritual being had ceased to be of significance in the historic process. They observed the situation as it was then, without analysing its causes: namely, man's failure to recognise that he was responsible for his own spirituality. Once man had turned history into a soulless and alienated machine, it immediately started to require human lives as the nuts and bolts that would keep it going.

Consequently man has come to be regarded first and foremost as a socially useful animal. (The only question is how to define social usefulness.) By emphasising the social usefulness of someone's activity to the point where the rights of the personality are ignored, we commit an unforgivable mistake and create all the preconditions for tragedy.

The issue of freedom raises the question of experience and upbringing. Modern man in his struggle for freedom demands personal liberation in the sense of license for the individual to do anything he wants. But that is an illusion of freedom, and man will only be heading for disenchantment if he pursues it. It takes a long, hard struggle on the part of the individual to liberate his spiritual energies. Upbringing has to be superseded by self-discipline: otherwise he will only be capable of understanding his newly acquired liberty in terms of vulgar consumerism.

In this respect, the situation in the West gives us ample food for thought. Incontrovertible democratic freedoms exist side by side with a monstrous and self-evident spiritual crisis affecting 'free' citizens. Why, despite the freedom of the individual, does the conflict between the person and society exist here in such an acute form? I think that the experience of the West proves that freedom cannot be taken for granted, like water from a spring that doesn't cost a penny and demands no moral effort from anybody; if that is how he sees it, man can never use the benefits of freedom to change his life for the better. Freedom is not something that can be incorporated into a man's life once and for all: it has to be constantly achieved through moral exertion. In relation to the outside world, man is essentially unfree because he is not alone; but inner freedom he has from the start, if only he can summon the courage and resolution to use it, accepting that his *inner* experience is of *social* significance.

The man who is truly free cannot be so in a selfish sense. Nor can individual freedom be the result of communal effort. Our future depends on no one but ourselves. Yet we have become used to paying for everything with other people's toil and other people's suffering—never our own. We refuse to take into account the simple fact that 'everything is connected in this world'; nothing can ever be fortuitous since we are endowed with free will and the right to choose between good and evil.

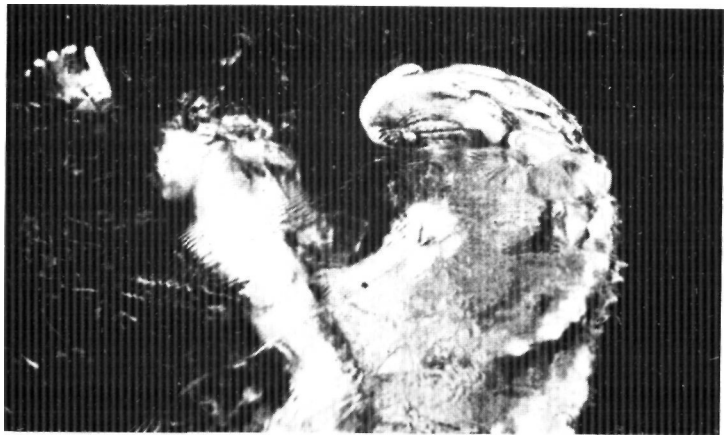
Naturally the opportunities for asserting your free will are limited by the will of others, but it must none the less be said that the failure

Nostalgia
Memories

to be free is always the result of inner cowardice and passivity, of lack of determination in the assertion of your will in accordance with the voice of conscience.

In Russia people are fond of repeating Korolenko's[27] dictum to the effect that 'man is born for happiness like a bird for flight.' It seems to me that nothing could be further from the basis of human existence than those words. I can never see what meaning the concept of 'happiness' as such can actually have for any of us. Does it mean satisfaction? Harmony? But a person is never satisfied, for his sights are never ultimately set on specific finite ends, but on infinity itself. . . . Not even the Church can quench man's thirst for the Absolute, for unfortunately it only exists as a kind of appendage, copying or even caricaturing the social institutions by which our everyday life is organised. Certainly in today's world which leans so heavily towards the material and the technological, the Church so far shows no sign of being able to redress the balance with a call to a spiritual awakening.

In this situation it seems to me that art is called to express the absolute freedom of man's spiritual potential. I think that art was



Nostalgia
The angel under the water.

always man's weapon against the material things which threatened to devour his spirit. It is no accident that in the course of nearly two thousand years of Christianity, art developed for a very long time in the context of religious ideas and goals. Its very existence kept alive in discordant humanity the idea of harmony.

Art embodied an ideal; it was an example of perfect balance between moral and material principles, a demonstration of the fact that such a balance is not a myth existing only in the realm of ideology, but something that can be realised within the dimensions of the phenomenal world. Art expressed man's need of harmony and his readiness to do battle with himself, within his own personality, for the sake of achieving the equilibrium for which he longed.

Given that art expresses the ideal and man's aspiration towards the infinite, it cannot be harnessed to consumerist aims without being violated in its very nature . . . The ideal is concerned with things that do not exist in our own world as we know it, but it reminds us of what ought to exist on the spiritual plane. The work of art is a form given to this ideal which in the future must belong to mankind, but for the moment has to be for the few, and in the first instance for the genius who made it possible for human awareness, with all its limitations, to be in contact with the ideal incarnate in his art. In that sense art is by nature aristocratic; it differentiates between levels of potential, thus ensuring progress from the lower to the higher as the personality moves towards spiritual perfection. Of course I am not suggesting any kind of class

connotation when I use the word 'aristocratic' rather the contrary: since the soul seeks for moral justification and for the meaning of existence, and moves towards perfection in the course of that search, everyone is in the same position and all are equally entitled to be numbered among the spiritual elect. The essential division is between those who want to avail themselves of this possibility and those who ignore it. But again and again art invites people to re-evaluate themselves and their lives in the light of the ideal to which it gives form.

Korolenko's definition of the meaning of human existence as the right to happiness reminds me of the Book of Job, where exactly the opposite view is expressed: 'Man is born unto trouble as the sparks fly upwards.' In other words suffering is germane to our existence; indeed, how, without it, should we be able to 'fly upwards'? And what is suffering? Where does it come from? From dissatisfaction, from the gulf between the ideal and the point at which you find yourself? A sense of 'happiness' is far less important than being able to confirm your own soul in the fight for that freedom which is, in the true sense, divine—where good and evil are balanced, and evil is never allowed to prevail.

Art affirms all that is best in man—hope, faith, love, beauty, prayer . . . What he dreams of and what he hopes for . . . When someone who doesn't know how to swim is thrown into the water, instinct tells his body what movements will save him. The artist, too, is driven by a kind of instinct, and his work furthers man's search for what is eternal, transcendent, divine—often in spite of the sinfulness of the poet himself.

What is art? Is it good or evil? From God or from the devil? From man's strength or from his weakness? Could it be an image of social harmony? Might that be its function? Like a declaration of love: the consciousness of our dependence on each other. A confession. An unconscious act that none the less reflects the true meaning of life—love and sacrifice.

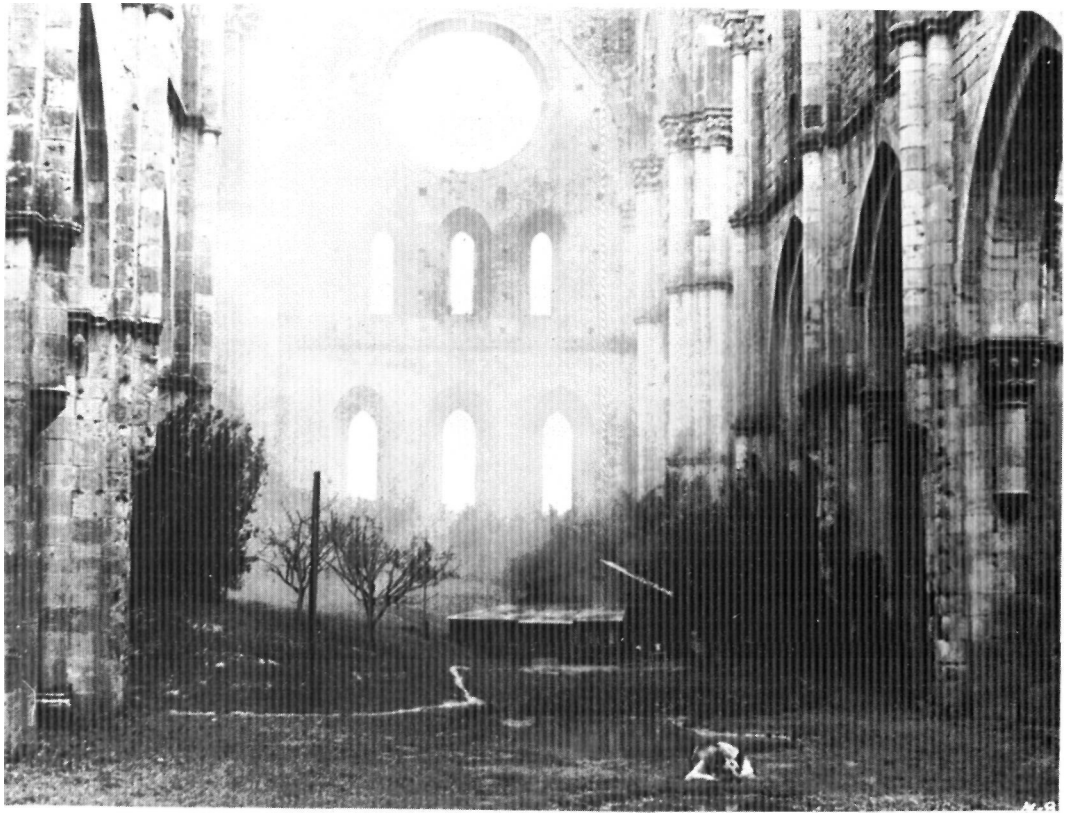
Why, as we look back, do we see the path of human history punctuated by cataclysms and disasters? What really happened to those civilisations? Why did they run out of breath, lack the will to live, lose their moral strength? Surely one cannot believe that it all happened simply from material shortages? Such a suggestion seems to me grotesque. Moreover I am convinced that we now find ourselves on the point of destroying another civilisation entirely as a

result of failing to take account of the spiritual side of the historical process. We don't want to admit to ourselves that many of the misfortunes besetting humanity are the result of our having become unforgivably, culpably, hopelessly materialistic. Seeing ourselves as the protagonists of science, and in order to make our scientific objectivity the more convincing, we have split the one, indivisible human process down the middle, thereby revealing a solitary, but clearly visible, spring, which we declare to be the prime cause of everything, and use it not only to explain the mistakes of the past but also to draw up our blueprint for the future. Or perhaps the fall of those civilisations means that *history* is waiting patiently for man to make the right choice, after which history will no longer be driven into an impasse and forced to delete from its scrolls one unsuccessful attempt after another in the hope that the next one may work. There is something in the widely held view that no lessons are learnt from history and that mankind takes no notice of what history has done. Certainly each successive catastrophe is evidence that the civilisation in question was misconceived; and when man is forced to start all over again, it can only be because up till then he has had as his aim something other than spiritual perfection.

In a sense art is an image of the completed process, of the culmination; an imitation of the possession of absolute truth (albeit only in the form of an image) obviating the long—perhaps, indeed, endless—path of history.

There are moments when one longs to rest, to hand it all over, to give it up, along with oneself, to some total world-view—like the Veda, for instance. The East was closer to the truth than the West; but Western civilisation devoured the East with its materialist demands on life.

Compare Eastern and Western music. The West is forever shouting, 'This is me! Look at me! Listen to me suffering, loving! How unhappy I am! How happy! I! Mine! Me!' In the Eastern tradition they never utter a word about themselves. The person is totally absorbed into God, Nature, Time; finding himself in everything; discovering everything in himself. Think of Taoist music. . . . China six hundred years before Christ . . . But in that case, why did such a superb idea not triumph, why did it collapse? Why did the civilisation that grew up on such a foundation not come down to us in the form of a historic process brought to its



Nostalgia
Final shot: 'the Russian house inside the Italian Cathedral.'

consummation? Did they come into conflict with the materialistic world that surrounded them? Just as the personality comes into conflict with society, that civilisation clashed with another. Perhaps it perished not only for that reason, but also because of its confrontation with the materialist world of 'progress' and technology. But that civilisation was the final point of true knowledge, salt of the salt of the earth. And according to the logic of Eastern thought, conflict of any kind is essentially sinful.

We all live in the world as we imagine it, as we create it. And so, instead of enjoying its benefits, we are the victims of its defects.

Finally, I would enjoin the reader—confiding in him utterly—to believe that the one thing that mankind has ever created in a spirit of self-surrender is the artistic image. Perhaps the meaning of all

human activity lies in artistic consciousness, in the pointless and selfless creative act? Perhaps our capacity to create is evidence that we ourselves were created in the image and likeness of God?

NOTES

1. *Innokentiy Smoktunovsky* (b. 1925) is a popular Soviet theatre and cinema actor, best known in the West for his Hamlet in Kozintsev's classic 1964 film. He was the narrator of Tarkovsky's *Mirror*.

2. *Arseniy Alexandrovich Tarkovsky* (1905-89) was a respected Russian lyric poet and the father of Andrey Tarkovsky, who often quoted his poems in his films.

3. *Vladimir Bogomolov* (b. 1924) is the author of the novella *Ivan*, published in 1958, on which Tarkovsky's *Ivan's Childhood* was based.

4. *Alexander Grin* (1880-1932) was a Russian poet and essayist.

5. *Alexander Dovzhenko* (1894-1956) was one of the founders of Soviet cinema. His early silent films *Zvenigora* (1928), *Arsenal* (1929) and *Earth* (1930), which combine revolutionary and Ukrainian nationalistic elements, were particularly admired by Tarkovsky.

6. *Kenji Mizoguchi* (1898-1956) is now, with Ozu, one of the most highly regarded of Japanese film directors, especially for such classics as *Ugetsu Monogatari* (1952) and *Sansho Dayu* (1954) He made over eighty films in thirty-four years, nearly half of these in the silent period, and his lifelong preoccupation was the fate of women at different periods of Japanese history.

7. *Effendi Kapiyev* (1909-44) was a Dagestani writer and translator whose diaries were published posthumously in 1956.

8. *Alexander Blok* (1880-1921) was a leading Russian Symbolist poet who welcomed the Revolution and exerted a great influence on Pasternak.

9. *Vyacheslav Ivanov* (1866-1949) was a poet and influential leader of the Symbolist movement in Russia, who held a regular salon in St Petersburg and encouraged many young writers and artists.

10. *Vassily Zhukovsky* (1783-1852) was a pre-Romantic Russian poet and translator.

11. *Dimitri Merezhkovsky* (1866-1941) was a Russian poet, novelist and critic who emigrated to France in 1920.

12. *The Lumiere brothers*, Auguste (1862-1954) and Louis (1864-1948), were successful photographic manufacturers who patented the 'Cinematographe', a combined film camera and projector, in 1895.

Their first publicly shown films in that year included *La Sortie des Usines Lumiere* and *L'Arrivee d'un Train en Gare de la Ciotat.*

13. *Father Pavel Florensky* (1882-?), an outstanding Russian religious thinker, died in a concentration camp.

14. *Leon Battista Alberti* (1404-72) was a Florentine scholar and artist who codified early Renaissance practice in architecture and the arts.

15. *Chapayev* (1934, directed by Sergei and Georgy Vasiliev), set in the Civil War, became a touchstone of 'Socialist Realism' in Soviet cinema.

16. *Mikhail Ilych Romm* (1901-71) was an important director, administrator and teacher in the Soviet cinema. He worked alongside Eisenstein in the 1930s and 1940s, and later taught at VGIK most of the Soviet 'New Wave' directors who emerged in the early 1960s, including Tarkovsky.

17. *Bashmachkin* is the tragic little clerk in Gogol's story 'The Overcoat'.

18. *Pascal Aubier* (b. 1942) is a French independent film-maker, best known for *Valparaiso, Valparaiso* (1972), who has made numerous experimental shorts and documentaries.

19. *Ivan Bunin* (1879-1953) was the first Russian author to receive the Nobel Prize for literature, in 1933. He emigrated in 1918.

20. *Vassily Shukshin* (1929-74) was a fellow student in Romm's direction class at VGIK with Tarkovsky. Born in a remote Siberian village, he brought peasant concerns into Soviet cinema and literature as an increasingly popular actor, scenarist, director and fiction writer. His most acclaimed film was also his last, *The Red Snowball* Tree (1974).

21. *Sergey Gerasimov* (1906-85) began as an actor with the avant-garde FEKS cinema group in Leningrad. He began directing in the 1930s and became identified with the conservative tendency in Soviet cinema, both as a director and teacher at VGIK. His last film, in which he also acted, was *Tolstoy*.

22. *Otar Yoseliani* (b. 1934) is an outstanding Georgian film director whose first feature *April* (1961) was never released and his last Soviet production to date, *Pastorale* (1976), remained unseen in the West until 1982. He has lived mostly in France since 1983, where he made Les *Favoris de la lime* in 1984.

23. *Yakov Protozanov* (1881-1945) was a leading Russian director, responsible for many of Mozhukhin's most popular films, who emigrated after the Revolution and worked in France and Germany, before returning in 1923 to begin a successful Soviet career with *Aelita*. He directed many of Igor Ilinsky's best comedies and a classic Ostrovsky adaptation *Without Dowry* (1937).

24. *Ivan Mozhukhin [Mosjoukine]* (1889-1939) was the leading male star of pre-Revolutionary Russian cinema who emigrated to France in 1919, where he continued his career as a romantic lead and also directed a number of films.

25. *Nikolai Gumilyov* (1886-1921), the first husband of Anna Akhmatova, was a prominent Symbolist poet who founded the 'Acmeist' group in 1912 and served with distinction in the First World War. He was shot after taking part in an anti-Bolshevik conspiracy.

26. *Pavel Sosnovsky/Maximilian Beryozovsky* (1745-77) was a Ukrainian composer and author of the opera *Demofont* (1773). He worked for many years in Italy.

27. *Vladimir Korolenko* (1853-1921) was a writer of short stories and novellas, many set in Siberia, and an autobiography.